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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY
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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF
'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES,' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK

VOLUME I

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK

INTRODUCTION

1. *Approach.*—Just as a cathedral window has to be looked at from within the building in order that its design and meaning may be discerned, so the Gospels have to be approached in a certain way in order that they may be understood and appreciated. They were written in the 'spirit and manner of a preacher,' rather than as histories or exhaustive biographies, and in the same spirit are they best approached.

Above all we are not to look on them primarily as a *corpus vile*, for the purposes of anatomical dissection. To do so is as if one were to look at a beautiful window from outside, or as if one tried to discover its meaning by a chemical examination of its material.

The modern preacher, therefore, as he begins to study this little volume for the purposes of his own high calling, finds himself moving by the Evangelist's side as by the side of a sympathetic guide. He is listening not to a professional raconteur but to a fellow-labourer and an ardent lover to whom the Person, deeds, and words of Jesus Christ are the gospel—the glad tidings of great joy.

The dominant note is struck at the very beginning in the beautiful word 'evangel,' and we must have something of this in our approach if we are to benefit as we ought.

We do not say this in order to veto the asking of questions and the exercise of full and earnest examination, but even those critical questions that inevitably and rightly suggest themselves will be most fruitfully investigated if we retain our sympathy with the primary aim and predominant mood of this earliest of the writing Evangelists.

We say the earliest, for the fact that this Gospel of Mark lies at the foundation of the others—affecting their substance and their structure—gives it a place of primacy, and indeed makes it indispensable that we should begin with it if we are best to see Jesus.

The recognition of this fact—a modern achievement—completely alters the view of the comparative value of this Gospel—for the purposes of historical investigation—in relation to the others. In the ancient Church and down to modern times Mark's status among the Evangelists was depressed because he was regarded as the follower and abbreviator of Matthew (*pedisequus et breviator*), as St Augustine called him, who had little new to say (*solus ipse perpauca*) that is not already found in greater fullness in Luke and especially in Matthew. His Gospel was looked on as posterior in time and inferior in substance, and few commentators considered it worthy of special exposition and comment.

The modern attitude is very different; certainly Mark is regarded now as first in time, and in substance possessing a special excellence of its own. The present position may be gauged by the following typical statement: 'It is therefore the proper beginning of any study of the Jesus of history, as well as the Christ of the Church's faith. . . . Unless we begin with this Gospel according to Mark and study well its pregnant words, we shall not be in the best position for looking into the very face of Him who is the central figure in all the Gospels.'

Its very priority in time, and the obvious use made of it by Matthew and Luke, gives it an additional claim on our study.

2. *Author.*—Who, then, is the writer, and what are his credentials and qualifications?

In his own work he makes no mention of himself by name, so, although the name of Mark occurs in our earliest MSS. attached to this Gospel, the work itself is really anonymous. There is an anonymity which is suspicious, but there is also an anonymity which is sublime, and we feel that the latter is the case here. But although the work is anonymous, the tradition that ascribes the Gospel to John surnamed Mark is so ancient and so corroborated by various streams of cumulative evidence

that almost all scholars accept it, and there is little hesitation in identifying the writer with that John Mark whose name occurs eight times in the New Testament.

3. *Author's History.*—The story of Mark's life can be gathered from these incidental allusions—four in Acts, three in Paul, and one in Peter—so that we can sketch an outline of important outward events in his life and, what is of more importance, of his spiritual history. He belonged by birth to a family characterized by conspicuous generosity of hearth and heart. His mother Mary—the owner of a wealthy house in Jerusalem—made that home the centre of gracious hospitality, so that Peter, when released from prison, instinctively turned his steps thither as to a haven of refuge. Here the early Apostles found rest and refection, and it is not unnatural to suppose that the liberality which characterized his mother and made her home the best known in Christian circles in Jerusalem, was in her son also.

Besides this, his kinsman Barnabas (either John's father was Barnabas' uncle or his mother his aunt), the wealthy Cypriote Levite, is one of the most attractive figures of the period, not only for his self-sacrificing generosity in material things, but also because of his generosity of heart, to which Paul owed his introduction to the early disciples and Apostles of Jesus. The spirit that would take a suspected and strange convert by the hand and give him welcome characterized Barnabas.

Brought up in such an atmosphere and under the inspiration of such examples, John Mark may reasonably be supposed to have been a choice young man. Peter in his First Epistle affectionately calls him 'my son,' and from this it has been supposed that Mark owed his conversion to Peter himself. While this is too large an inference to draw from these words, it is not too much to say that he sat at the Apostle's feet in his mother's house, and drank in his words about Jesus and treasured them in his heart; and it is gratifying to note that the last record of Mark in the New Testament reveals him as ministering in a spirit of filial piety to the aged Apostle whom he had learned to admire and love in his youth. Tradition makes him the interpreter and follower of Peter (*interpres et sectator Petri*), and this expresses the truth, for his assumed prænomen, Marcus, indicates that Greek was familiar to him as a spoken tongue from his boyhood.

Through Barnabas he was brought into personal touch with Paul, and with these two he went on their first missionary journey, as far as Perga in Pamphylia, in order to help with the administrative details of the mission. He had, as Paul in old age testifies, a natural aptitude for such work—'a natural bent for ministering.' Few things are better known than his desertion—or apostasy, as Paul calls it—when he refused to go farther than Perga and returned home to Jerusalem. Men still take sides on the merits of the case. Luke the historian is very restrained in his language in describing the event—one might say almost neutral on the question—but there is no doubt that, while Barnabas could excuse and even justify Mark's action, Paul felt keenly about it and refused on this very ground to avail himself at a later date of his services when these were suggested. We cannot help regretting that he was thus the cause of a vehement breach in the partnership between these two, but the regret is somewhat mitigated by the knowledge that in the end the relationships between Paul and Mark were again established on happy terms.

After the breach with Paul he went with Barnabas to Cyprus, and it is presumed on traditional testimony that after the death of Barnabas Mark went to Alexandria and founded the Christian Church there. We find, at any rate, that when Paul was writing to the Colossians and Philemon, Mark was with him in Rome, and that he expected shortly to go on a visit to Colosse, to which Church Paul heartily recommended him. Whether he paid that visit or not we cannot say, but in writing later to Timothy Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark again with him to Rome as his valuable gifts of ministering were greatly needed.

Such are the details supplied by the New Testament regarding the personal history of the writer of this Gospel. Those who desire to follow the extra-biblical tradition which associates him with Alexandria and Venice must consult the authorities given by commentators (see, for example, Swete's *Introduction*, pp. xiii-xxviii).

Is there any indirect indication of the authorship in the Gospel itself? There is one passage worthy of special mention because it is taken by many to carry hidden within it a bit of Mark's own personal history.

'And a certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him over his naked body, and they laid hold on him; but he left the linen cloth and fled naked' (xi. 51 f.). This passage is peculiar to Mark and it is held that he himself was the young man. On other grounds it may be argued that the house in which the Last Supper was held was his mother's house and that Gethsemane was her private property. If so, then Mark was aroused from sleep by the tumult in the Garden, and he hastily rose and went out to investigate. Learning the state of the case, he attempted to rescue Jesus from the servants of the High Priest. But when he was opposed and in danger of being arrested himself, his courage failed him and he fled, leaving the linen wrap—an evidence of comparative opulence—in their hands. We can, of course, never be sure of this, but it is finding more acceptance as an explanation of these verses. The present writer—and it may be a fancy without any real basis—has for some time wondered if the puzzling epithet of stump-fingered (*kolobodactulos*) applied to Mark can be connected with this event. Some have explained the word as indicating a natural defect; others as if Mark had deliberately mutilated his hand in order to disqualify himself for the duties of the Jewish priesthood (for he is taken to have been a Levite, as Barnabas was) surely an impossible suggestion. Others explain it metaphorically as meaning a 'deserter,' referring to the well-known Perga incident, and others, again, as referring to the mutilated state of his Gospel, whose ending is lost and which has no account of the nativity of Jesus. Is it possible that as Malchus lost an ear that night so Mark may have lost a finger? Nothing depends on the rightness or wrongness of the suggestion. But the incident in these verses—if they refer to Mark himself—may well be taken as a kind of water-mark in the Gospel, 'the evangelist's signature to his portraiture of Jesus.' That suggestion is full of probability. Just as some Greek sculptors put their names on their works in an inconspicuous place thus, *Praxiteles epoiei* (made this), so Mark here without directly mentioning his own name.

If that be so, we venture to suggest that it is more than this. It is a preaching of the gospel of grace in a peculiarly personal way without being obtrusive—as much as to say, I who in my youthful enthusiasm failed Him in the crisis of the Garden, and latterly failed His great Apostle at Perga, yet now, restored, redeemed, forgiven, am given this grace to write the Gospel of the Saviour who gives others what He gave to me, a second, yea! and a third, chance.

There is another incident, not peculiar to Mark but containing peculiar details in Mark's narrative, which ought to be mentioned in this connection—namely, the sending of the two disciples by Jesus to prepare a room for the Last Supper. The owner of the house has been taken to be Mark's father, and if so he also was a disciple and must have died soon after this, as he was evidently dead at the time of Pentecost, and the man who carried the pitcher is taken to have been Mark himself. A well-known modern scholar has said of this incident: 'The very vivid details which Mark supplies may point to special knowledge of the circumstances from personal connexion with the household in question. He may even have been the man carrying the pitcher.' It is right to mention these passages, conjectural as the views suggested are, because here, if anywhere in the Gospel, we may have indirect personal allusions by the author to himself.

4. *Certain Distinctive Features of Mark's Gospel.*—After we have gathered all the information we can about the author from other sources, we feel that in order to know him we have to look at the Gospel itself. His work is the surest revelation of his personality. *Si monumentum quæris, circumspice.* What, then, are the special characteristics of Mark's Gospel? On the surface there are two that cannot fail to strike us. First there is his fondness for Latin words in Greek dress (see chaps. iv. 21, v. 9, vi. 27, vii. 4, xii. 14 f., 42, xv. 39). From this it has been inferred that Mark, in acting as interpreter to Peter, translated for him at Rome into the Latin tongue; but the only thing we can safely say is that Mark had in view among the readers of his Gospel those to whom these Latin words would be immediately intelligible, and that would mean all who used Greek as their ordinary speech. These Latin words like 'grabatus,' a bed, 'speculator' and 'centurion,' were familiar to all Greeks, just as words like 'sofa' or 'general' are used to-day by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders or by Welshmen in their own native tongue without any sense of incongruity. Mark used the vernacular Greek of

Rome, if, as is likely, the Gospel was written there (see B. W. Bacon, *Is Mark a Roman Gospel?*), or if written in Antioch, as Vernon Bartlet in his excellent Commentary in the Century Bible contends for. Whether in the one place or in the other, Greek was the vernacular of the Christian Church, and Mark, as was natural, used the tongue in which he could be best understood.

Secondly, there is in Mark a frequent use of Aramaic words—not only proper names like Bartimæus, Boanerges, and Golgotha, but common terms like Abba, Corban, Ephphatha, and expressions like 'Talitha cumi,' and our Saviour's cry of dereliction on the Cross, 'Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani.'

To base on this a theory that Mark wrote originally in Aramaic or that he had a written Aramaic source is not warranted by the facts. Undoubtedly he spoke Aramaic, and in that language he heard the events of Christ's life related, and these expressions were actually spoken in that tongue in which Christ spoke; but Mark, as is clear from the style, used Greek with ease and wrote his Gospel directly in that tongue. These Aramaic words were used by him as a foreign missionary to-day employs a native word or expression in addressing an audience at home. They are in line with Mark's well-known realism. Even Paul, writing to the Romans in Greek, uses the word 'Abba,' Father. To go behind our present Gospel for sources other than Peter's reminiscences and the general oral tradition which Mark had such ample opportunities of knowing is not required and only breeds confusion.

There are, however, certain inward peculiarities of this Gospel worthy of attention.

George Borrow relates of a certain painting by Murillo that as he looked at it the figure on the canvas seemed to move as if animated with life, and there is about Mark's narrative a certain vividness that communicates itself to the reader. He sees what he describes, and describes what he sees with his eye as it were always on the object. There is a graphic pictorialness that calls up a scene as a clever artist with a few strokes can depict a landscape or a face so that all can recognize it. Mark's various sections have for this reason been aptly called 'The Cartoons of St Mark.' This vividness is often effected by the notice of small details, like the greenness of the grass where the five thousand were fed in the wilderness, or the notice of their sitting down in rows of hundreds and fifties. It is quite possible that some of the realistic touches in Matthew and Luke we owe originally to Mark, whose work is at the basis of theirs, but there are sufficient of these peculiar touches in Mark to make them very precious. Who does not feel the power of the saying about the rich young ruler—'Jesus looked on him *and loved him*'? What an added insight into our Master's heart! Personal details like Simon the Cyrenian being the father of Alexander and Rufus contain a family history in them. To Mark we owe also the reference that our Lord was in the habit of rising early long before the sun for prayer.

His very grammar, style, and vocabulary aid the movement and vividness of his narrative. The word 'straightway' occurs thirty-four times in the first nine chapters. There is a Quaker-like simplicity of style—with few digressions, with no wastage of words, so that he is in his simplicity sublime. Perhaps this is what Papias meant when he said that Mark wrote with *akribeia*—with accuracy of detail—and without *taxis*, without elaborate, laboured fullness. He is fond of the direct historic tense, of the short pithy sentence, of particles that help the movement of his artless style without blurring the main points, so that the total effect is highly objective.

How much of this is due to his own genius and how much is due to Peter, from whom he got his information, it is impossible to say. There can be little doubt that in Mark's Gospel we have not only much of Peter's matter but also of his manner, transmitted through the medium of Mark's own mind, with a great deal of the plain direct realism of the original source preserved; nor does this in any way detract from Mark's own originality and distinctive genius. In many sections—as in the account of the Transfiguration and in the Raising of Jairus' daughter—the influence of Peter is unmistakable, but Mark's own way pervades the whole Gospel and makes it a unity in plan and style, however he got his material.

It has been pointed out as a curious fact that on certain occasions where Peter plays the chief rôle Mark omits what enhances Peter's status among the disciples—the best-known case being the encomium on Peter at Cæsarea

Philippi—and that he seems to emphasize the errors and failures of Peter—our Lord's stern rebuke after the confession, and his threefold denial on the dark betrayal night. May it not be that Mark emphasizes what Peter himself would emphasize as he told these stories, namely, his own failures as against the Lord's forgiving and restoring grace? The Apostles certainly were not inclined to pose as infallible. Like Cromwell, they could say—'Paint me, warts and all'; and the Evangelist Mark is characterized in this respect by what Professor Burkitt calls 'unecclesiastical unconventionality' in reporting the failings of the disciples (*cf.* chaps. iv. 13, 40, vi. 52, ix. 32, 34). We do not honour Apostles or saints by hiding their faults under a halo. They are great in spite of them, and their sins are often the materials out of which Christ by His grace fashions their excellences. Mark painted men, even Apostles, as they were, without any fear of damaging consequences.

Even so he is not afraid to paint the perfect Lord Himself in all the sinless weaknesses common to humanity—as subject to emotions of wonder and distress and astonishment—and this he does not in any Docetic fashion, as if this were mere seeming, but as a matter of fact, unembarrassed by any critical theory. Professor Bruce even goes so far as to attribute to Mark a certain 'lack of reverence,' but it is surely no lack of reverence just to speak truth plainly on the instinctive assumption that truth has nothing to conceal or apologize for. It is but a false reverence—'an unholy solicitude for Christ,' which would defend Him, and in the interest of a theory would suppress facts. Mark followed Peter by setting things down as they are. The theory must arise out of the facts and be tested by them. Thus Mark talks frankly of our Lord's sympathy, sadness, and anger, even of His confessed limitation of knowledge (xiii. 32), and of His inability to do mighty works because of unbelief. He paints things as they are, and for this plainness we can say of his Gospel what Macrobius said of Vergil, putting Mark in place of Maro: 'Such is the glory of Maro that no man's praise can increase it, no man's censure can diminish it.'

5. *The Contents of the Gospel.*—Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark does not begin his Gospel by an account of the birth and boyhood of Jesus. He mentions later on His brothers and sisters and the fact that He was a carpenter, but concerning the miraculous birth he gives us no information of any kind. This is sometimes taken as a piece of positive evidence against the truth of these stories, but it is obvious that Mark's silence is no proof either way, nor can we say that it is even negative evidence against these narratives. He begins his Gospel exactly as Peter began (Acts x.) in dealing with Cornelius—with the ministry of John the Baptist as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, the herald of the Messiah spoken of by Isaiah, and with the baptism of Jesus by John. He finishes his Introduction (i. 1-14), having brought before us the Central Figure about whom he is writing.

It is the active ministry of Jesus that Mark is concerned with, and therefore the earlier events are not dealt with, simply because they do not fall inside the scope of his purpose.

After the short Introduction the Gospel itself falls into two well-defined main sections.

The first section (i. 14-ix. 50) deals with the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Here we can trace our Lord's manner of teaching as well as the response given to His Person, words, and deeds. We see our Lord beginning with His address in the local synagogue, and then, as the work develops, betaking Himself to the larger auditorium of the open air, taking the towns on the lake-shore as centre and enlarging the sphere of His activities by various excursions into the rest of Galilee. We can thus trace a certain extension of the sphere of operations, and in the same way a certain progress in the matter and method of His preaching.

He begins with the call to repentance and the announcement of the gospel of the Kingdom, then He selects certain disciples until at last He chooses a certain band of twelve to be with Him in order that He may train them in the mysteries of the Kingdom, which even they were so slow to grasp, but with the proclamation of which they were ultimately to be entrusted. We can trace also the growing hostility of Scribes and Pharisees to His Person and claims, which makes necessary on our Lord's part a defence of His attitude towards ceremonies and customs, and to His own disciples an initiation into the secret of His Person, mission, and message, His rejection, His coming

suffering and death, and His resurrection. Mark does not give us such a wealth of teaching as either Matthew or Luke, and he shows us how the teaching arose, as it were, out of the immediate occasion. There are more miracles than parables, but there is one parable of great interest which he alone tells, namely, that of the seed growing secretly, which, we may believe, specially appealed to Mark's own missionary instincts. Two great turning-points are noticeable in this period, namely, the adoption by Jesus of the parabolic method of instruction —not exclusively, for all along His teaching is vitally connected with His deeds—and, secondly, the clearer announcement of His Passion after the confession at Cæsarea Philippi. 'The whole of this complicated process moves onward in St Mark's history in so easy and natural a manner that we are scarcely conscious of the movement until we come to analyse the contents of the Gospel' (Swete). There are scarcely any digressions—the main one in chapter vi. being occupied with a full account of John Baptist's martyrdom and Herod's relation to Jesus, a story of singular pathos in itself and of great practical value to those for whom Mark more specifically wrote his Gospel. For it is almost certain that he wrote somewhere between 64 and 68, shortly after Paul and Peter were put to death, and when persecution was a dread reality. The example of John, faithful unto death, would give courage to those who were face to face with peril, and therefore would fall inside the scope of Mark's purpose. With chapter ix. the account of the Galilean ministry virtually closes, and the second main section begins with chapter xi. 1 and goes on to chapter xvi. 8. Between these two sections there intervenes the ministry in Judæa and Perea (chap. x.), evidently a transition to the Jerusalem ministry. The events of the last week in Jerusalem are told with the fullness of a diary. Here, besides the account of the Passion, we have the difficult discourse in chapter xiii. concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, important as affording a valuable clue to the date of the Gospel, for it is certain that Mark would not have written as he does here if Jerusalem had then been destroyed, so that we can with high probability date the Gospel before A.D. 70.

Into the vexed question of our Lord's eschatological statements we cannot enter here. Suffice it to say that in Mark the discourse is altogether practical, enforcing on the disciples watchfulness, for many deceivers would arise; faithfulness, for trials would abound; and hopefulness, for the gospel would be proclaimed in all the earth and the ultimate victory and glory of their Lord would be vindicated. Heaven and earth might pass away but His words would stand, the basis of a new world over which He in triumph and glory would at last reign. There are also ominous parables passionate with the intensity of love which shed tears over Jerusalem, and shedding light on our Lord's unique conception of His own Person as Son of God and Heir of the heritage, and then follows the story of the Cross in detail. It has been said that Mark's Gospel is a reading backward of the life of Jesus in the light of the Cross, and indeed this can truly be said of all the Evangelists—'All the light of sacred story gathers round that Head Sublime.'

The Gospel closes abruptly and violently in our oldest MSS. at chapter xvi. 8 with a particle (γαρ), a sure proof of incompleteness. It is one of the standing enigmas of textual history how Mark's original ending was lost and what that ending was. The deficiency was early supplied by section xvi. 9-20, which now forms the conclusion in our own Bibles. There is a shorter ending which, as it is not in our Bibles and yet is of interest, may be quoted here: 'But all the things that were commanded they reported briefly to those about Peter (including Peter himself). And after these things Jesus Himself sent forth through them from the East even unto the West the incorruptible message of eternal salvation.' Who wrote this ending cannot be said, nor can we say who furnished the longer ending familiar to us unless we ascribe it, on the evidence of an Armenian MS. of the tenth century, discovered in November 1891 by Mr F. C. Conybeare, to one Ariston or Aristion, perhaps the person of that name mentioned by Papias as a disciple of the Lord. In all probability Mark's own ending included a section dealing with the Commission of the Risen Lord to His disciples to preach the evangel in all the earth.

When we compare Mark's matter with Matthew and Luke we see that they have much of which Mark says nothing, but on the other hand it can be seen that they include all Mark's sections with very few exceptions. The strange incident of the young man (xiv. 51 f.) already

dealt with is peculiar to Mark, and also the special parable of the seed growing secretly (iv. 26-29), and there is a miracle of healing of a deaf-dumb (vii. 31-37), so that it might seem as if Mark's Gospel was in itself of little import; but, as Westcott points out, 'there is perhaps not one narrative which he gives in common with St Matthew and St Luke to which he does not contribute some special feature,' and, besides, there is a special individuality of choice and arrangement of material that makes this Gospel of peculiar interest and importance.

6. *Mark's Picture of Jesus.*—What, then, is the picture of Jesus which Mark gives us? This is of all questions the most important, and nothing is more gratifying than the increasing unanimity of scholars on this point as a result of the careful study of this and the other Gospels.

To begin with, our Lord's real *humanity* is unmistakably pictured. The Docetic movement, which at a later time appealed to so many, and the tendency even in orthodoxy to make our Lord's humanity something *sui generis*, finds no sanction here. Mark does not give us any account of His birth or boyhood for he is primarily a preacher, but to him our Lord was a man of like passions with ourselves, with real bodily needs—tempted, grieved, gladdened, pained, needing food, rest, and retirement—with a body, soul, and spirit, astonished at unexpected situations, asking questions for information, seeking strength and guidance in prayer, and all this in reality.

Besides this, His humanity is social—not like John Baptist in the wilderness, aloof from his fellows, practising asceticism in food and dress, waiting till the crowds came out to him. Jesus mixes with men, conforms to ordinary customs, and although John worked no miracles and Jesus did, yet altogether Jesus is more socially human. He began as a carpenter and never claimed exemption from the laws of human nature. He worked no miracle to exempt Himself from the ordinary lot of man, and yet the Evangelist is sure that this was because of self-restraint, not from lack of power. Unlike the Scribes and Pharisees, He consorted with publicans, sinners, and outcasts, but as a physician with patients. At last He died a painful death.

But, while all this is true and of everlasting importance, Mark is very emphatic that Jesus was more than man. At the outset he brings Him before us as the Promised Messiah—Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose coming was the gospel foretold by prophets (Malachi and Isaiah quoted). No sooner does He appear for baptism than He is proclaimed from heaven as God's Beloved Son (a Messianic term), and in His public ministry He is proclaimed by unclean spirits as the Holy One of God and the Son of God. It is true that Jesus refused testimony from such a quarter, and that in those quarters where He might have expected recognition and reception it was denied Him. His fellow-townsmen resented His claims on the ground that He was one of themselves, a carpenter whose brothers and sisters they knew—a detail mentioned in such a way that we are almost constrained to admit that these were real brothers and sisters. His own family thought He was beside Himself, and the Pharisees suggested that He was in league with the prince of evil. That He was extraordinary no one denied or could deny. Some regarded Him as a prophet; and Herod's guilty conscience suggested to him that He was John Baptist risen again.

Even His own disciples were in perplexity as to who He really was; nor does it appear that during the Galilean ministry Jesus was anxious to set these questionings at rest by any definite declaration. But from the beginning He claimed the authority to forgive sins, not simply to declare them forgiven, and He verified His claim by healing the body. He exercised lordship over the most sacrosanct observances like the Sabbath, and He was early aware that He as Messiah would have to suffer. It is maintained that at first Jesus did not think of Himself as anything more than a prophet, and that He expected a coming of the Kingdom of God without the sacrifice of Himself as a necessity, that His death was forced upon Him; but even those who say this candidly admit that that is not Mark's view concerning Him.

At Cæsarea Philippi the disciples made discovery of His Messiahship, further verified and illumined on the Mount of Transfiguration. From this time onwards the picture of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah liii. is predominant in the mind of Jesus, and He speaks freely of His death and the glory that should follow.

But to His own intimate followers the necessity of the Cross was unwelcome and unthinkable. They wanted a crown without a cross, a conquest without Calvary. But as early as the second chapter Mark makes it plain that to Jesus Himself His death was part of His plan and redemptive purpose. They saw Him from the beginning controlling Nature as a lord a servant, and evil spirits and disease were subject to Him. His authority in teaching was unmistakable. What manner of man, then, is this who reads the thoughts and meets the woes of the bodies and souls of men?

As He enters on His Jerusalem journey and ministry His Messianic claims are in the forefront. He is the 'Son of Man,' a title which not only links Him with mankind in their frailty but, as is now accepted by all scholars, was in essence Messianic—a pre-existent Divine Being whom yet no apocalyptist had the daring to dream as actually becoming man—but is now incarnate in Jesus. This title is His own favourite one for Himself. He is hailed as the Son of David at Jericho, enters Jerusalem in Messianic pomp, and when Caiaphas asks Him if He be Messiah, He answers unambiguously, 'I am.' On this ground He was crucified, and even as He dies on the Cross a Roman centurion is constrained to cry, 'Truly this man is the Son of God'—a prophecy, as it were, of a similar confession in later times with deeper meaning.

He calmly prophesies that His gospel will be preached in all the world. His claims go beyond anything that any prophet ever dared, and all this Mark brings before us, not in the interests of a theory, but in the course of simple narration, as if it was a fact accepted by all the Church. To those who argue that His death was an unforeseen event on which He was forced against His original purpose, and who on that basis speculate that the Kingdom of God would have been established without His death if men had believed in Him as Prophet alone, what can we say? Just this—that this Gospel does not dream of such speculations, nor does the New Testament generally. It is like the question, What kind of Incarnation would have happened if man had not sinned? To Jesus His death was inevitable from the beginning of His ministry, only to the disciples the disclosure of His mind was gradual and progressive. Other men die because they are born; He was born in order that He might die. His death is for the many—a new covenant is thus inaugurated. Men's attitudes to Him determine character and destiny. He is to be Judge because He was not only Prophet but Priest *par excellence*, and in virtue of this is His redemptive kingship, although by nature He is Heir of the heritage of God. He is not first a Prophet or an ethical Ideal but a Redeemer, and that redemption culminates in His death. Unfortunately we do not have Mark's account of Him after the Resurrection, but we have enough to enable us to say that in Mark we have the picture of Jesus Christ which has indelibly fixed itself on the mind of the Christian Church.

It remained for others to develop this picture of Christ—to Mark the facts were supreme, and He sets them down as He knew them without any developed theory.

In the ancient Church the fathers had a fancy that just as there were four points of the compass and four cardinal winds in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace there were four Gospels, and of these four each invaluable for its contribution. Mark is in its own place a 'possession for all time,' which posterity would not willingly allow to be lost.

DONALD M'KENZIE.

Back to the Beginning

Mark i. 1.—'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

BACK to Jesus; back to the beginning; back to the earliest Gospel; back to the original impression made during these two brief years on the little band of friends who ate and drank with Him; back to the untouched and unedited form of St Mark. That is the cry at the heart of all criticism; that is the cry in the soul of many who, whatever their knowledge of criticism, sigh for peace and relief and security. Every one of us is sensitive to the significance of the cry, and certainly no minuteness of study can be in vain, if it can but attain to such a result. Only, the more interested we are in this process of research, the more important does it become to recognize from the first the

limitations set on the result that can be reached by this road. For we must remember that, in confining our attention to the career of Jesus on earth, we are definitely proposing to omit all that actually raised that career into becoming the nucleus of a religion. What the faith of the first Christians rested on lay outside and beyond the career recorded in this primitive record. Their faith was rooted upon a Christ seated at the right hand of God the Father in power. Christianity was born at Pentecost. But this lies beyond the lines of that Gospel which we are seeking to unearth. Our primitive St Mark will lead up to it, but it will not actually touch it. It will imply that it is coming, but that is all. It will tell the plain narrative of the Crucifixion, but it will not account for the faith that actually, historically, came into existence, for it will leave out its motive-cause and its adequate object.

We see, then, that in going back behind the moment in which Christianity was actually born, we go back to the days when the belief of the disciples had nothing on which to stay itself, and could not understand, and finally shivered and broke. Nothing that constituted the life of faith had yet begun. This is the time back into which we are trying to go. No wonder, therefore, that, taken by itself, the record of those days does not account for the after-faith. And why, then, are we surprised if our reading of the Gospels starts a hundred questions which we cannot precisely answer out of the books themselves? That is just the condition in which the earthly career left the Apostles.

1. In getting back to that primal preparatory manifestation we are startled by the intense Judaism of the portrait which criticism discloses. The further we go back the more marked are the racial and national characteristics of the Lord. It is seen with ever-increasing clearness that Jesus the Christ kept always within the horizon which was His by His birth and blood. He accepts all the habitual outlook of His day, and acquiesces in all its limitations. There is not an expression taken up by Him, such as 'Kingdom of Heaven' or 'Son of Man,' which cannot be accounted for out of the materials at His hand.

We are struck most vividly by this, perhaps, in two characteristic departments.

(1) First, our Lord's complete adoption of the national way of regarding disease as a possession of the devil. We know how He adopted the world of sickness as His special field of activity. And in doing so He felt Himself to be encountering and expelling the same foe whose fetters He was breaking in the region of spirit. And, above all, in the cases of those who were regarded as possessed of devils, He assumed Himself to be directly in conflict with demoniac agencies, and handled the entire cure under this category. He claimed authority over them by virtue of His own prior victory over their master—that adversary Satan—whom He had wrestled with and overthrown in the wilderness. In all this He was simply accepting the normal beliefs of those about Him. He makes their language His own; He finds no difficulty in using it freely, and they understood Him perfectly.

(2) Again, there is a special mode of summing up the significance of human life which is typically and essentially Jewish. It is that which we describe as apocalyptic. The entire prophetic development of Judaism had been driven, under the stress of prolonged national adversities, to deliver its ultimate utterance in the form of an Apocalypse. The natural powers of human society on earth exhibited more and more convincingly their impotence to achieve the Messianic consummation; the tyranny of evil was too strong. Israel's own loyalty was too grievously tainted. More and more the attainment of that consummation demanded, they said, an inrush of supernatural forces, a cataclysmic revolution, an arrival of succour from afar, a day of overwhelming reconstruction. Nothing can be more emphatically Jewish than this apocalyptic literature; and it is that language of the uttermost vision which our Lord made emphatically His own. No doubt by looking very closely we can trace the signs of His special care in using it. He threw out warnings against supposing that this fervent language, overleaping as it did the intervals of time, was inconsistent with long periods of weary delays, when lamps would go out for need of oil, and stewards who had begun in wisdom and faithfulness would be led to say in their hearts, 'My Lord delayeth his coming.' He used it with a purpose all His own. But, granting this, it is still certain that He took upon His lips phrase after phrase which belonged

to the ordinary stock of apocalyptic language common in His day.

¶ 'The fact remains,' writes Father Tyrrell, in his posthumous work, 'that it was in the form of apocalyptic thought that the religious idea of Jesus embodied itself, and exercised the most potent religious influence that the world has yet known. Yet we cannot say that we owe the apocalyptic form to Jesus, that it was the creation of His spirit. He found it to hand. It was the religious language of His surroundings. He had not first to invent and teach a new language before He could communicate with His people. He took the existing language as the medium, not only of His speech but of His thought. His own place, indeed, in the apocalyptic scheme was the substance of His personal revelation. For the rest He adopted the revelations of others.'

2. How are we going to face this result? Well, we who are able to bring to bear on it the force of a definite belief in the Incarnation know how to find in it not a hindrance or a perplexity, but a strong reassurance.

(1) First, we are taught to recognize the intense and emphatic reality of His Incarnation. It was no abstract, ideal, visionary humanity that the Lord assumed when He came among us. It was our very flesh that He became, in concrete, historical, literal actuality. He took it in the exact form in which it stood at a certain date, in a certain place, amid a certain environment. He shut himself up within our limitations; He allowed Himself no selection, no liberties, no exceptions, no privileges. In everything, except sin, He was a man touched with the spirit of our infirmities. The natural, normal environment of His birth and growth sufficed Him for His great task. He made its scanty resources afford to Him sufficient opportunity for manifesting how man can verify His Divine Sonship. Every fresh proof of the narrowness of the limitations under which He worked is a new witness to the triumph of His achievement.

¶ The Greeks had a legend that Athene, the Goddess of Wisdom, sprang full-armed and intellectually complete from the brain of Zeus. That placed Athene clean outside the categories of humanity. But Jesus was born a child. He grew, He learned, He increased His knowledge by asking questions. He passed through exactly the same processes of acquiring knowledge as we pass through still. He was true and perfect Man.[1]

(2) Then, secondly, if we ask how those narrow tribal conditions could lend themselves to this eternal valuation, we have our answer in that amazing preparation which we believe to have been made for the coming of the Word. Those were no accidental conditions, rare and confined and local as they were. They were the last product of a process which had been worked out under centuries of peculiar discipline. After all, is there anything to compare, for spiritual value, to the genius with which this strange Jewish people had gripped the one vital secret of all religion? Take, for instance, those immortal chapters of the Second Isaiah, those chapters which carry the Jewish interpretation of life to its most splendid culmination. Is there anything in the world like them? And what the Second Isaiah had portrayed, the Baptist had reduced to reality and to fact. He had made it the actual moral experience of an entire people. And more than this, he had declared aloud that the one thing that still was hopelessly lacking was the change of heart which the vision was powerless to effect. That was the last word of the highest spiritual movement ever made by man from within himself. And it was into this moral and spiritual environment that Jesus Christ entered. The Jew, and the Jew alone, had actually succeeded in throwing up the highway down which God could travel to meet man's upward endeavour. Therefore, this intense Judaism of the Lord explains and justifies itself. In it we recognize how true to human history was His appearing. Nothing was accidental or indifferent in the manner of His coming. He came at the precise moment which interpreted His coming; He came under those precise conditions which the stern sifting of historical forces had verified as capable of offering to Him the fit vehicle, and of making to Him the fit response.

¶ Nothing in Nature is more wonderful than the way in which complementary things and creatures arrive together; and in history the same phenomenon is repeated. 'God's trains never keep one another waiting.' Events synchronize and harmonize. The Incarnation is

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Lord of Life and Death*, 197.

the crowning example of the dramatic unities of history.[1]

But without the full creed in the Risen Christ we shall only find ourselves engaged in an antiquarian research after the far-away ghost of One who belonged to other times and to remote conditions, and from whom we are now divided by centuries of scientific advance and intellectual change. It is the Christ, alive and indwelling, who alone can interpret and vitalize and verify the Christ of the gospel story.

Strong Son of God

Mark i. 7.—'There cometh one mightier than I after me.'

St Mark seems to have taken this utterance of the Baptist's as the keynote of his Gospel. The whole Gospel is a commentary on that first line of *In Memoriam*—'Strong Son of God, immortal Love.' It is pervaded by an intense conviction that Jesus is mighty in word and deed. To the Roman admiration of strength and heroism, as well as to the scepticism of its then exhausted speculation, St Mark seems to say—Here is a plain account—so plain and straightforward that it cannot be suspected—of the words and works of Jesus Christ.

John Baptist was himself a strong man, and he knew it. The leaders of the religious life of the day gathered round him in great crowds; men of different ranks had come out for the purpose of hearing what he had to say, and his voice so penetrated their consciences that, openly, they confessed their sins. He was a reformer—a bold, uncompromising, ascetic reformer. He knew that things needed to be altered, and he was determined to get them changed as speedily as he possibly could. He saw the exaggerated conceit which dominated the popular religion; he recognized the pride and self-righteousness which took the place of humility and of trust in God, and therefore he spoke with the utmost strength of conviction, of fiery vehemence, of austere denunciation, until thousands came and avowed themselves convinced by his utterances and expectant of a better time.

And yet, when John is at the very fullness of his power, when the maximum of his energy has been attained and recognized, his great comfort is that somebody stronger than himself is at hand, that there is a mightier One coming after him. He himself is mighty—he is aware of it; still, his evangel is, 'There is one coming after me whose shoe laces I am not worthy to untie—for He will display power far surpassing anything that I have shown.'

1. The strength of Jesus is first shown in His prompt *acceptance of the new revolution.* He is prepared to take upon His shoulders the responsibility of taking it from the hand of John and pushing it on and on; and He does it with such distinctness and emphasis as to make it clear that He is possessed of greater strength of mind and will than even the Baptist himself. And His dedication of Himself is accepted by God.

His power is shown, too, in self-mastery. Speedily He is impelled by the Spirit into the desert, and there a wrestling takes place, a fight with Himself as to what means He shall employ for the accomplishment of this new purpose, the methods by which the revolution which He has accepted shall be carried forward. A man's strength is shown quite as much in what he will not do as in what he does. To be able to say 'No' often requires more heroism than it does to say 'Yes.'

¶ Mrs Whitney has written a book in which she tells us of a man who says, 'I can't talk much maybe, but, God helping me, I can hold my tongue, and He knows, I guess, which it takes most of a man to do.'

The temptation in the wilderness is the temptation to take swift and short methods towards a millennium. Again and again and again, thrice over, came the temptation to the Christ, and He had power to meet the temptation and to subdue it, and to subdue Himself.

2. Jesus appears next as a strong *Teacher.* The summary of His sermon throbs and thrills with energy. We have only a short summary of it—but we feel how rich, how eloquent it is: 'The time is fully come, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe this good news.' And as the people listen, here and afterwards, they know the authority with which He speaks. He differs unspeakably from the customary preachers and prophets with whom they are familiar; he talks with

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, 269.

authority, but it is not the authority of office, for He has not got any. Nor is it the authority of the Church, for He does not recognize the Hebrew Church as having any authority over Him. He has come to fulfil its best promise and to realize its highest ideals.

We listen to a man, and we try to analyse his power. We say, How is it this man casts his spell over me? It is the authority of character. Nothing is so potent in a speaker as character; office is nothing compared with the power which a sincere, whole-hearted, dedicated man has.

¶ Liddon had that which we call 'distinction.' You might agree with him, or not agree; you might criticize and discuss his gifts; but, anyhow, he had the quality of speciality. In any roomful of men, his presence was felt with a distinct and rare impression. If he let himself speak, his voice, manner, style, articulation arrested you; you wanted to listen to him, whoever else was speaking; his phrases, his expressions caught your ear. Here was somebody notable; so you knew. He stood out from his fellows; there was a flavour in his company which was unique. And this impression is one which belonged to character; it was not the result of any particular and separate gift, but it made itself known through them all.[1]

¶ In the Iliad Homer makes one named Thersites deliver a speech against Agamemnon, whose forces besieged Troy. As an oration it is as fine a thing as the Iliad contains. But it failed to influence the troops, and merely brought Ulysses' staff across his back. Alexander Pope says that if Ulysses had spoken those lines the soldiers would have deserted Agamemnon to a man, and set sail for Greece that very hour. What was the difference between the two men? Thersites had power of logic, formal eloquence, even graceful diction, but he lacked what Ulysses possessed—personality.[2]

It is character that Jesus has. The people feel it in His words, they hear it in His tones, and they say, 'How strange! What does this mean? Here is a new sort of teaching and a tone of authority.' Yes, Jesus Christ is unquestionably mightier than the Baptist. He has in Him such a power of completest surrender to God, and completest union and communion with God, as to make Him one with God; and the people who listen feel the Divinity of the speaker, and are compelled to submit themselves as to the voice of the Eternal.

3. The next picture is of Jesus Christ's power as a *Leader*. John must have felt that very much. He could not have much doubt about it when all his own disciples, who had felt the influence of His teaching, left him and went over to Jesus Christ. And John had the greatness of soul to say, as he contemplated the exodus of these his chosen, as they are bound to their new Master, 'He must increase, but I must go down and down, and I am glad of it.' The magnetism of Jesus Christ as a leader of men was one of the great evidences of His power.

We see Him, too, when the crowds are ready to crown Him, ready to say of Him, 'He is the one we have long been expecting; let us now enthrone Him as our great deliverer,' and Jesus Christ gets up in the middle of the night, and says to His disciples, 'Let us go away; it is dangerous to stay here. This popularity is not good.' He has the power to do that; and so, out from the midst of this invading enthusiasm He goes, and spends the time in communion with His Father.

¶ Always when success, as men judge, came to the Master, He never failed to clutch swiftly at God's hand to steady Him. It was not success in His view at all, that noisy enthusiasm that did not understand, that shout that would have lured Him from His own high purposes to stoop to be a king. But face to face with popularity and triumph, our Lord always felt that He stood upon slippery places, must keep near to God. Shakespeare knew that, and tells us it was in the day of his success that these foul alien thoughts looked in at the window of Macbeth's mind, and, pushing the door, found it open and came in, to make what hideous ruin of a stately soul! 'They met me in the day of my success.'[1]

These are some of the pictures from the genius of Mark thrown on to the canvas, showing that a mightier than the Baptist has come. And what we have in these opening verses is characteristic of the whole of this Second Gospel.

Why is the historicity of Christ of so much importance to us? Wherefore is it necessary for us to go back to Jesus Christ? One answer

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 140.
[2] J. W. G. Ward.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 185.

is that only by going back to Jesus as He is found in the Gospels can each succeeding generation escape from the tyranny of the last generation's theories of Christ. How did the artists of three centuries ago paint Jesus? If we go into our galleries and look, we find the Christ of passive resistance dominating the entire representation. It is acquiescence in a burden which He will not lift from His shoulders that controls the artistic imagination. That is not the full representation of the ministry of Jesus. That was a strong ministry, rich in its energies. Outflowing, overflowing power characterized that ministry. Mark gives us the true thought of Jesus. From early morning till late at night it is action—beneficent, philanthropic, healing ministry; and that is the picture of Jesus that needs to be brought before us, so that we may escape the despotism of preceding generations concerning Christ.

Now the Christ of the ages—what is He? Paul is the first and best witness as to what Christ was as the Christ of the ages, and Paul puts into a phrase the new consciousness that has been created in him and his fellow-Christians by Jesus Christ: 'I am equal to all things through Christ who strengthens me, empowers me.' It is the mark of Paul that he is ready for anything. Paul is typical of the primitive Christian community; and that community is the manifestation of the invincible strength of Jesus. Is there anything that more distinctively marks out that early Christian community than its insuppressible power, its advancing and growing strength? We see it going on from point to point, always with resources not exhausted.

Ought we not to be mightier than the men who went before us, we who inherit the strength of the past? What is the use of coming after preceding generations if we cannot better them? If we are cowards—if we cannot bear burdens for the sake of securing triumphs for righteous causes, if we will not work so as to make room in the earth for the great ideas of God, and suffer and fight, speak or be still, to get them established—then verily we are not strong sons of God. Ours it is to be strong in the Lord:

> Strong in the Lord of hosts,
> And in His mighty power,
> Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
> Is more than conqueror.

The New Age

Mark i. 9.—'It came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.'

John Baptist, during his loneliness in the desert, in the discipline of those years of preparation, had seen that the old age was passing; that a time of terror was near; that men must flee from the wrath which was surely to come upon a generation of vipers. He had seen something of the quality of the new age. It was to be a time of greater fairness and justice between man and man. It was to be a time when the extortion of the civil power and the oppression of the military power should be curtailed. But in what shape the new age would be moulded, of that he had no clear vision. Indeed, he knew only this, that he who was the forerunner would not and could not be the producer, the initiator of the new day. He looked for Another in whom was the spirit of the Holy One, who should take His cry of Change—his cry which had meant, Change your mind, for your ways are evil and full of blood—and fill it with a new and positive meaning. Change your minds; for God reigns, and His ways are righteousness and peace. And to him, so hoping, came Jesus.

1. Most of us belong to a generation which, like that of John, has lost its best strength in the wilderness of struggle and suffering, and out of that sojourning with loneliness has brought this conviction—that the old age is over, that if we persist in the old ways there is blood and terror and the downfall of civilization and the calamity of war before us. And most of us can see, too, that if we or our successors are to rise to the level of the present opportunity, if we are to fulfil in any way the hope of a new day, we have two great tasks in front of us.

(1) We have, first, *to discover the basis of a world-wide civilization*, to discover some means by which the nations can live together in peace, to make real and secure that solidarity of mankind which commerce and science have made available for us but which we are ill-equipped to use rightly. That task is familiar. A multitude of agencies is endeavouring to bring home to us the need that we should no longer think in terms of Britain and the world or of the

British Empire and the world, but should go forward to a vision of mankind in all its races and nations as one family.

There shall be no more wars nor kingdoms won,
But in Thy sight whose eyes are as the sun
All names shall be one name, all nations one,
All souls of men in man's one soul unite.[1]

(2) The second task, not less difficult or less hazardous, is one which very few people realize at all. It is *the discovery of a new partnership between men and women* which shall enable us to use rightly and for the welfare of all the great gifts which the educated and enfranchized womanhood of to-day is bringing or could bring to the world. In breaking away from the old tradition, the tradition expressed in such lines as, 'He for God only, she for God in him,' we are overthrowing an assumption as old as Eden. We are changing conventions, yes, and customs based upon those conventions, which go to the very root of our domestic and of our public life. Is it not incredible, incredible if it were not happening, that in the multitude of discussions about industrial and political matters neither our statesmen nor our journalists ever seem to draw attention to the vast problems which arise out of the entry of womanhood into the professions and callings, when it is perfectly obvious to anyone who faces the facts that the entry of women on to the labour market is, more than any other element, responsible for the dislocation and discontent of the time; when women workers, exploited and cheapened, are everywhere throwing out of employment young men with young families, and no one pays attention to the problem which that series of facts creates?

¶ 'A few months ago,' writes Canon Raven, 'I was consulted by a group of social students about the syllabus of a dictionary of Christian Sociology. It was a full and careful list, covering every sort of heading from Charles Kingsley to the Bourgeoisie, and from Guild Socialism to Tariff Reform. But no single reference was made in any way to women—feminism, women's suffrage, women's work and wages, sex antagonism, women in politics, all were simply omitted. Here was sociology with its most difficult problems shirked.'[2]

[1] Swinburne, *A Year's Burden.*
[2] C. E. Raven, *Women and Holy Orders*, 18.

Surely the whole question of the status of the new womanhood, and of the relationships between men and women, not only in the more intimate and personal dealings, but over the whole range of the activities which are now common to them both—surely that should attract and hold the best thoughts of all who would try to serve their day and generation.

2. It may be that, like John Baptist, we do not see more than the bare outlines of the task that awaits us. We have been worn out by the readjustments of years of pain and stress until we can see the perils but not the way to meet them. We can only cry, Repent, repent! and must leave it to another and a cleaner and a stronger generation to take up and enlarge the challenge which we can issue and utter. That answer will come by calling attention, as Jesus did, to a third task, greater than the creation of an international order, greater than the achievement of a true partnership between men and women, free and equal. It will come as we learn to rediscover God. John Baptist called the people to get rid of their sins, to give up this and give up that in their personal and social lives which caused offence. Jesus said: God's Kingdom is in your midst, listen to the good news of it; open your eyes and see it; open your minds and understand it; consecrate your wills and serve it. The Kingdom comes. And behind these, as they seem to some, more practical issues of to-day, behind them surely our greatest, our most pressing need is for God, is that mankind should recover religion and replace in the centre of its activity the service of the Eternal; should recover the proportion and perspective which only a background of eternity can give; should begin once more to estimate the value of what is new in art and literature, in science and statesmanship, by no other standard than that of conformity to the will of God. There is our need. We who have seen vast realms of new knowledge made available for man, we who have seen so immense an enrichment of the material side of life, we who in the light of that new knowledge ought to be able to see the glory and the grandeur of God as no generation has ever yet seen them—we cannot see that glory, that grandeur, because the multitude of the things which should be its sacrament obscure it.

And so it is that to us as in our Lord's day

there are many voices crying in the wilderness and saying: Repent; flee from the wrath that is coming upon the world; exact not, oppress not. But these voices, like John's, are futile and their claims will be unfulfilled unless they are met with the response that Jesus gave, the response that those who would bring in the new age must seek first God's Kingdom, God's righteousness.

It is not a question of revising certain formularies of worship. It is not a question of readjusting one or two clauses in our creeds. It is a question of the sort of new vision which Jesus gave to the world, a vision which affects and is affected by the whole outlook of mankind, a vision in which all things are made new. It could be won, it could be won in this generation of ours, if there were among us those who would consecrate themselves to be worthy of it. If we were prepared to be driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, if we were prepared in lowliness to seek and find God, if we were prepared to dedicate whatever powers we have of mind and soul, of perception and intuition, to God and God only, He would not fail us.

John's message met with immediate answer. It met with the answer of the Son of Man in whom the Son of God was incarnate. Our generation, crying in the wilderness of the need for a new birth, crying in the wilderness as the herald of a new age, will meet its answer only if the sons and daughters of men, this Church of Christ, is enabled again to incarnate the Eternal Spirit of the Master; for He who came once to be baptized of John in Jordan comes again in the Spirit into the midst of His people, into their lives and selves, and reveals in them and to them the Eternal.

God grant us wisdom in these coming days,
And eyes unsealed, that we clear visions see
Of that new world that He would have us build,
To life's ennoblement, and His high ministry.

Only have vision and bold enterprise!
No task too great for men of unsealed eyes;
The future stands with outstretched hands.
Press on and claim its high supremacies.

Jordan and the Wilderness

Mark i. 12.—'And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness' (R.V.).

THE Spirit, who only just previously found its symbol in the form of a dove, now reveals powers of stern compulsion and 'straightway' drives Him into the wilderness. What a startling change for our Lord Jesus Christ, from the rapture in the waters of Jordan to the solitude and the duel of the desert! What a converging of the supreme forces of good and evil round the lonely figure of Him who has come to fulfil all righteousness on our behalf! The Divine Spirit urges Him out and on to the scene of temptation; and there the wicked spirit assails Him with the subtle craft and the tremendous appeal of temptation itself.

Note that it was the dove Spirit that drove Him into the wilderness. It was not the impulsion of an alien power. It was not the flaming sword of the enemy that drove the Nazarene away from Jordan's green and quiet banks. It was the great Lover who led the Beloved from the feast to the fight. Jordan and wilderness are both parts of the same Divine plan.

¶ My own conviction is that if the devil could have escaped that day, he would have done so. It is a very popular fallacy that the enemy drove Christ into a corner and tempted Him. But the whole divine story reveals that the facts were quite otherwise. God's perfect Man, led by the Spirit, or as Mark in his own characteristic and forceful way expresses it, driven by the Spirit, passes down into the wilderness, and compels the adversary to stand out clear from all secondary causes, and to enter into direct combat. This is not the devil's method. He ever puts something between himself and the man he would tempt. He hides his own personality wherever possible. To our first parents he did not suggest that they should serve him, but that they should please themselves. Jesus dragged him from behind everything, and put him in front, that for once, not through the subtlety of a second cause, but directly, he might do his worst against a pure soul.[1]

1. Why did the Holy Spirit constrain and impel our Master into the conflict?

[1] G. Campbell Morgan, *The Crises of the Christ*, 133.

(1) Partly, the ordeal was *for the perfecting of His human character.* 'By the things which he suffered,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'the Son learned obedience.' It was not that Jesus must be disciplined into acquiescence with the good and holy will of God under the stress of danger and in the glow of the hostile flames. No, but it was that, through the Temptation, He learned experimentally and practically what obedience is. It ceased to be simply an inner principle and an abstract rule. It was acted out. It was displayed. It was finished. The darkness discovers the stars; and the darkness of the wilderness discovered the holiness of Christ.

¶ There is an invisible ink; and what you write with it remains unseen till a strong heat is applied to the paper; then it comes out distinct and clear. The law of the Lord was written within the heart of the Man Christ Jesus; but the strong and fiery heat of Satan's attack made the glorious writing fully legible.

(2) Partly, also, the ordeal was *for the promotion of His official ministry.* Milton has hymned 'Paradise Regained' as well as 'Paradise Lost'; and he traces to our Saviour's struggle and victory in the wilderness the recovery for us of the blissful seat. 'Now,' sang the angelic choirs, who refreshed Him, wearied after His campaign with 'fruits fetcht from the tree of life, and from the fount of life ambrosial drink'—

> Now thou hast avenged
> Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
> Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
> And frustrated the conquest fraudulent.

That is a defective view. Paradise had never been regained unless Christ had travelled further on, to a sorer combat against the enemy. There must be the sin-bearing of Calvary. There must be the great atonement in the blood of the Cross. Yet something may be said for Milton's contention. Satan had tempted our nature in Eden, and had gained an easy triumph. Here again is Satan tempting our nature, though not now in a garden, but in a stony desert and among the wild beasts. It is the Second Adam against whom he directs his artillery. One as truly our Representative as was the first father of our race in the dark backward and abysm of time. And Christ retrieves for us that ancient defeat. It is not enough that He should be sinless in Himself; He must overcome sin as our Kinsman and our Captain.

¶ Galahad is not the only hero of that mediæval legend called the Quest of the Holy Grail. It is told to the accompaniment of solemn music how Parsifal achieved the Grail. The most significant difference between the two is that Galahad wins with ease, but Parsifal with difficulty. Galahad is born good, and stays good, but never meets a champion who does him any serious hurt. On he goes, serene and confident, as if the Quest of the Grail were but a summer journey along a shady lane. But Parsifal is one of us. He has our human nature. He fights our human battles, while we hold our breath wondering whether he will win or not; he meets our own temptations and finds them terribly hard, as we do: struggles with them, wrestles with them, is weary and heavy-laden, hurt and bleeding. When he achieves the vision of the Grail, it is not with smiling face and shining armour. Parsifal is the true hero of the search for the Holy Grail, not the serene Galahad. In the story of the Temptation, the Son of God shows us that He is the Son of Man. The Divine Master, the Lord of life, assures us that He is of our kin and kind, flesh of our flesh. He suffers with us, as well as for us: and is perfectly good, but not easily good.[1]

These were reasons why the Holy Spirit led Christ to the dread encounter with the evil spirit. And as He drove Him forth to the contest He sustained Him throughout it. His humanity was upheld and energized, not from within alone, but from above too, by the might of the Comforter, who did not fail nor forsake Him.

2. 'It is among the great principles of Christianity,' Pascal said, 'that everything which happened to Jesus Christ should come to pass in the soul and in the body of each Christian.' Everything, temptation included.

For us the trial may take the shape of a shattering bereavement, a staggering blow, a loss which leaves us stripped and bare; those hurricane blasts shake our being to its very roots. Or it is more palpably the doing of the evil one—an enticement to positive sin; a suggestion that we should seek a good end in

[1] George Hodges.

an unrighteous way; an invitation to consult our own interests more than God means us to do; an exaltation of presumptuousness and self-will. Do not let us suppose that the adversary will let us alone, because he *has nothing* in that true life of ours which is hid with Christ in God. His antagonism is all the fiercer because we have escaped from his rule. He will do his utmost and his worst to dislodge us from our place of peace and citadel of strength. And the Holy Spirit, our Friend and Benefactor, intends us to meet 'the power of the night, the press of the storm, the post of the foe.' He *driveth* us, as He drove our Lord, *into the wilderness*.

And for similar reasons. The assault ought to deepen our character. It intensifies our distrust of our own capacities, which never can carry us through these fearful hazards in safety. It matures our trust in One who, as we depend on Him, makes us more than conquerors. It enlarges our sympathies. It vitalizes numb nerves and makes them sensitive to the sorrows of mankind. It is strange that it is the wilderness that awakes the sleeping family sense and gives us kinship with the race. The sons of pity and the daughters of consolation are born in the wilderness. Our own pain converts us into physicians who can healingly touch the pains of others.

¶ Queen Victoria, in a letter to Lord Tennyson after the death of his eldest son, wrote, 'I say from the depth of a heart which has suffered cruelly and lost almost all it cared for and loved best, I feel for you; I know what you and your dear wife are suffering.'

Jordan without the wilderness! What would life be without temptation? Suppose life demanded no vigilance and no quest and no resistance. Well, then, most assuredly there would be no moral muscle, no heroic fibre, no spiritual grandeur.

¶ In one of the greatest books of the Renaissance, although its greatness is not spiritual—in the Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini—there is a moving and exhilarating account of the casting of his masterpiece, the bronze statue of Perseus which fronts the piazza at Florence. How the wood was gathered from the forests; and the clay for the mould was seasoned for months beforehand; and then the furnace was kindled, and the logs took fire, and the heat became overpowering, and the craftsman sent for all his pewter platters and porringers and dishes, to the number of some two hundred pieces, and had them cast into the blaze till the metal was in perfect liquefaction; and the mould filled beautifully; and, after it had cooled for two days, the statue was uncovered; and it was so complete, so fascinating, so picturesque, so dramatic, that in his astonishment its artificer saw the hand of God arranging and controlling all.

'And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee,' says St Luke. The sentence has in it something of the strength and pomp of an army marching back from battle with triumphant banners. He went into the wilderness driven by the Spirit. And now in the power of the Spirit He returns.

The Temptation

Mark i. 13.—'And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.'

In telling the story of His temptation our Lord made use of the language of parable—as was His wont whenever He made a revelation. Just as, when He wished to disclose the very heart of God, He told the story of the Prodigal Son, so here He avoids all minuteness or explanation, anxious, we may believe, that the disciples should not miss the real heart and first impression of His experience. When He told them that on the day of His baptism, 'straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him,' Jesus knew that they understood the character of the conflict; that they understood that He also, their Lord, had not been spared that moral trial which is inevitable to other men. And so He explained nothing as to the nature of temptation, as to the personality of Satan or the difficulties of reconciling his presence in human affairs with a world over which the good God presides. Jesus raised none of these questions. He described an experience which they could understand, and in language which was real to them and to Him—an experience which must be described in some such language, or else left for ever mysterious.

To Jesus, at the hour of His baptism in Jordan, there came the definite revelation that

He had been chosen as God's Messiah. We know little of His mind before that day, what thoughts concerning Himself were maturing there; but from that day He knew for ever His rank and calling. It was a revelation of dignity, of glory, but it was at the same time a revelation of duty and of suffering. Like one of ourselves when a new responsibility, which must have far-reaching effects, comes to us, Jesus' first instinct was to be alone, to think, to foresee, to confront His Spirit with His calling, and to take knowledge of Himself.

¶ At the beginning of his story, *The Naulahka*, Kipling describes how Kate Sheriff, the heroine, has trained as a doctor, with no special sense of vocation. Then, almost unwillingly, she attends a missionary meeting, and hears of the condition of Indian women. With a certainty which cannot be denied she recognizes that here is the Call, here is her vocation. When the students stream out of the lecture-hall, she breaks away from her laughing, chattering companions and goes into a quiet lonely garden. The need for quiet, the need to think out the meaning of this new idea, and its implications for her future life, is instant and insistent.[1]

In this high mood Jesus hurried into the wilderness, and there met Satan; and we conclude that the whole assault of Satan, its inmost significance, was to seduce Him from that high mood, to lower, somehow, the lights within His soul. Every man who knows anything about the soul knows that every exalted mood, every high sense of life, of its sacredness and responsibility, meets the devil next moment. So it was with Jesus, who was tempted in all things just as we are—but without sin.

> Not alone in pain and gloom
> Does the abhorrèd tempter come;
> Not in light alone and pleasure
> Proffers he the poisoned measure.
> When the soul doth rise
> Nearest to its native skies,
> There the exalted spirit finds,
> Borne upon the heavenly winds,
> Satan, in an angel's guise,
> With voice divine and innocent eyes.[2]

Though we always speak of the first, and second, and third temptation, there was really but one. Just as, with ourselves, in every deep experience, it is *one* thing that is troubling us, *one* thing that is haunting us; so here, Satan chose three different methods, but he had but one object.

1. *Temptation to a Low View of Himself.*—Observe the manner of the first assault. 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' 'If thou be the Son of God.' It was an attempt to raise a question in the soul of Jesus. Satan tried to break the spring of action in our Lord's soul by hinting a doubt. Satan is above all else the seducer, the spirit who slays ideals, who kills enthusiasms in human souls. He is the supreme cynic, who has no belief in man, and delights to trip him up in every high and generous mood. He insists that there is no good thing in man, nor can be. He laughs at every pure uprising in the human soul, and puts upon it some low interpretation. He is the denier, as God is the Affirmer, within all souls.[1]

¶ 'I believe,' said Arnold of Rugby, 'that "Nil admirari" is the devil's favourite text. And therefore I have always looked upon a man infected with the disorder of anti-romance as one who has lost the finest part of his nature and his best protection against everything low and foolish.'

¶ The possession of reverence marks the noblest and highest type of manhood and womanhood: reverence for things consecrated by the homage of generations—for high objects, pure thoughts, and noble aims—for the great men of former times, and the high-minded workers amongst our contemporaries. Reverence is alike indispensable to the happiness of individuals, of families, and of nations. Without it there can be no trust, no faith, no confidence, either in man or in God—neither social peace nor social progress. For reverence is but another word for religion, which binds men to each other, and all to God.[2]

What is the doubt that Satan suggested here? It is as though he had said: 'It is well to have high feelings, and the sense of a Divine mission in life; but'—this was the first assault, and every assault on a man's personal ideals begins with that word 'but'—'but it may be you are deceiving yourself. It may not be God who is

[1] Peter Green, *Our Lord and Saviour*, 27.
[2] R. W. Gilder.

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Our Only Safeguard*, 147.
[2] S. Smiles, *Character*, 14.

inspiring you, who is calling you. You may be mistaken. In any case, are you quite sure? You can soon satisfy yourself. You are hungry. Here are stones. See if they will turn into bread at your word.' But Jesus silenced him and repelled him there. For had He yielded, had He agreed that it was quite fair for one who believes in God to demand at every step some visible sign that God is with him, He would have set what is seen above what is unseen, the outward above the inward, and would have dethroned faith from the soul. For the very quality of faith lies here—that a man shall be obedient to its call, shall trust to his own private inspirations, shall believe they come from God, and shall go forward just as they lead though circumstances remain hostile and God gives no sign.

Is not this the method of Satan with us still? For the first time we see what God would have us be and do. And with a new light in our eyes we set out, the glow of the experience itself carrying us for a certain distance, and then—we meet our Satan. He may be in the form of some friend whom we have not seen for a time, and who does not know what has been happening within us of late. He speaks to us in the old way, he looks at life in our hearing as we used to look at it together. A voice begins to attack us from within. 'Do you not see,' it says, 'that you were setting yourself too high a task? You see how the glow of those fine feelings of yours has already died. If God was ever behind those feelings, He has certainly forsaken you now.' He goes on: 'Remember you are only a man, with the appetites, with the weaknesses of a man. Why did God give you these appetites if He did not mean you to yield to them?' As Satan might have said to Eve, 'Why are these apples in the garden?' At this point we might give the adversary a heavy fall. For we might say, 'Yes, but if God gave me appetites only that I should obey them, has He not also given me a higher appetite—the sense of duty, the call to be pure—and does He not mean me to obey it? Which is the line of wisdom for such a being as I am?' A man might say that and thwart Satan even at close quarters. But it is more likely that for the time being he is overcome—overcome by listening to, by entertaining, a view lower than the highest of those personal inspirations to high and spiritual living which visited him.

2. *Temptation to a Low View of Others.*—Having failed to seduce Jesus by raising doubts in His mind regarding His own commission and high sense of life; having failed to lead Jesus to take a low and cynical view of Himself, the devil proceeded to suggest to Him a low and cynical view of other men, of the Jewish nation, and of mankind.

It is as though he had said: 'Granted, then, that you are the Son of God, granted that these high emotions of yours are the very breathings of God, what then? Who are they for whom you are going to give up your life? Why should you take the high road, the sublime road, the way of spirituality and of suffering? You can get them on lower terms. Come to terms with men. Fall in with their own worldly ideas. Here are the Jews, for example; they want a Messiah of a certain kind—one who will be their King and free them from Rome. Even at this moment Jews are praying in the courts of the Temple for the Messiah to come down from heaven. Get you, then, to the pinnacle of the Temple; fall down amongst them. They will say that you fell from heaven. They will proclaim you King. You will be supreme in one day and without a moment's pain. For that matter, lower your demands of men; and, if you have the power of God with you, you may have the whole world at your feet—once more without a moment's pain. They all have their price—a small one. Lower your terms, your demand; promise them just what they want—and the world is yours.'

So spoke Satan, and Jesus answered: 'Get thee behind me. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' And we read—an historical experience for Jesus, and the parable of our experience if we faithfully repel the voice of our seducer, the low and cynical view of our place and duty in this world—'The devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him.'

The Wild Beasts and the Angels

Mark i. 13.—'He was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.'

'He was with the wild beasts,' says St Mark, who alone gives us the vivid picture, 'and the angels ministered unto him.' Life always hovers between the beasts and the angels; and,

however wolfish may be the eyes that affright us in the day of our temptation, we may be sure that our solitary struggle is watched by invisible spectators, and that, after the baying of the beasts, we shall hear the angels sing.

¶ In Rome, in the catacomb of St Callixtus, there is a painting of Orpheus, and round him are depicted the wild beasts, tamed and hushed to listen while he plays. Though the representation is an uncommon one, it is generally agreed on all sides that its subject is really our Blessed Lord. The assumption is that the artist, though on every side of him there were evidences of what following Christ meant, though perhaps in his ears was still ringing the cry 'The Christians to the lions,' was so possessed with the idea of the love and protecting power of Him whom he owned as his Lord, that he painted Him as sitting unharmed though surrounded by wild beasts. His thoughts possibly went back to the old days when he had himself stood among the howling mob who, on a 'Roman Holiday,' had seen some poor Christian writhing in utter isolation in the midst of the amphitheatre during that awful moment before the beasts were let loose upon their victims; and now, not knowing how soon his own turn might come to experience the same ordeal, he depicted for his own encouragement Christ sitting among the wild beasts. A writer in the *Spectator* (H. C. Minchin, 13th December 1902) describes with vivid power what must frequently have been in such a man's mind:

> The ranks are crowded, tier on tier,
> And midst them in my place am I,
> As oft before; we talk and jeer,
> Waiting to see yon captive die
> Who in the arena stands alone:
> He turns his face—I see my own!
>
> 'Tis I that wait the roar and rush
> When bars are raised; 'tis I that fall
> Upon my knees, amid the hush
> Of cruel tongues, on Christ to call;
> Upon whose parted lips the while
> There breaks a glad triumphant smile.

1. 'Wild beasts' and 'angels'! In his own picturesque way the Evangelist describes the conflict, yet he has a larger purpose in view. He suggests the great antagonism, but he does not fail to offer a message of hope. He does not write as if he were reporting a local event, but as one who saw the universal value of the conflict. The conflict was wrought in the Saviour's life, as it is in every life, and the victory won is our victory and our hope. There is the universal exposure to the 'wild beasts.' It is all so understandable in the light of our own experience. For we have lived through days and nights which are only interpreted to our puzzled minds by the great fact that He was tempted in all points like as we are. And we never fail to gather insight and inspiration for our struggle from the record of His redeeming resistance and loyalty. For we learn from it that in itself temptation is not sin. We see that tests are entirely necessary to the development of faith. We realize that it is by disciplined souls the Divine purposes of human redemption and blessing are carried out.

Wild beasts and angels together form an impressionist picture of human personality. In every man there lives the beast dormant or rampant—the beast of passionate desire, easily aroused and hardly silenced—the beast which anon feigns tameness, only to break out on a favourable opportunity in ferocity and strength. Who does not know the surprise of its awakening at the challenge of a thought or the suggestion of a look? Who has not been overmastered by its power, so that words have been spoken which henceforth have filled life with vain regret, and plans carried out which for ever afterward have covered the face with shame, and filled the heart with unavailing remorse? The dictum of the heathen philosopher, 'Man, know thyself,' is for most men a counsel of perfection. For who can know the heights and depths of his nature, its amazing disloyalties and antipathies, its startling affinities and potentialities, its unexpected feebleness and indifference? The arousing of the beast, however awakened, is for most men a swift and frightening revelation of the dark possibilities of their being. Too often in consequence they regard themselves as inevitably condemned to moral surrender. Resistance appears futile; and they simply yield to the beast's sway as though no alternative offered.

And yet in every man there is, too, something akin to the angel. In our zeal for the truth let us not be afraid to recognize that there are in human nature affinities with God as well as differences. To insist upon total depravity as

though this term covered the whole realm of human life, or explained the whole problem of human personality, is simply to deliver all men to the beast. God made man in His own image; else there would be no stirring of desire for Him, no prompting of conscience when confronted by moral alternatives, no effort after the things that are pure and lovely and of good report. It is this which alone interprets the conflict between the lower and higher calls which each hears in his own nature. This, moreover, explains alike our moral failures and successes.

In all this, Christ means everything to us. For we see Him—with glory laid aside that He should have no greater resources in the struggle than are available to those He came to redeem—ministered to by angels. And the glorious truth of the gospel is that when we begin to yield to the angels, reinforcement of our every effort is realized. Thus personality is built up. The obligation of personal choice as to life's central control rests upon every man.

The opposition of wild beasts and angels is a half-tone engraving of the common experience of temptation. The wilderness may be situate amid the busy haunts of men or in Nature's lonely solitudes, as well as in the quiet homes of Britain. It simply stands for that solitariness of heart of which all know something, in which life's fiercest battles are always fought. And it is never so real as when one is in a crowd. In the big city frowning, snarling, leering beasts are all around. Every day brings some fresh and searching experience. Voices and influences from out the past urge us to make sin's fatal experiment. Misgivings and fears about the future make the present seem altogether desirable, and its delights worth every moral sacrifice. The consciousness, too, that abandonment to the beast would end the oppressive loneliness of life is a strong incentive to yield. And in how many lives is the beast victorious! How often have we ourselves fallen to him!

2. As we ponder over these things it leads us to inquire what the Divine purpose is in all this exposure. We recall the prayer of Jesus: 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.' Probably we are not far from the truth when we say that moral antagonism awakens our best gifts. It has always been a law in devout human life to find the best graces of life coming to the light through much conflict.

¶ Disraeli's first effort as a speaker in the House of Commons was a failure, and it provoked the laughter and mockery of the members. The ridicule tore him like wild beasts, and his pride was wounded; but one great result was that he vowed to make the House hear him before many years passed. And although it took him forty years to accomplish the task, he fulfilled his pledge.

If we turn to the Acts of the Apostles what a wondrous story is told! What mighty antagonism, what a host of armed enemies against the saints! Who ever thought that Peter had the graces and gifts of a saintly hero? It needed a winter blast, a mighty hurricane, a dead opposition to bring all his best gifts into full view. And John, Stephen, Timothy, Paul! What of their great powers of life? They were the fruit of an antagonism that almost seemed designed by God for that purpose alone.

¶ There is a beautiful chapter in *Margaret Ogilvy* entitled 'How my Mother got her Soft Face.' It is a suggestive exposition of a sweetness of life that came through suffering and bereavement. 'With the joys were to come their sweet, frightened comrades pain and grief; again she was to be touched to the quick.' 'She had a son who was far away at school, a merry-faced boy of thirteen. When the terrible news came the face of my mother was awful in its calmness as she set off to get between Death and her boy. We trooped with her down the brae to the wooden station, and I think I was envying her the journey in the mysterious wagons. Her ticket was taken, she had bidden us good-bye with that fighting face which I cannot see, and then my father came out of the telegraph-office and said huskily, "He's gone!" Then we turned very quietly and went home again up the little brae. That is how she got her soft face and her pathetic ways and her large charity, and why other mothers ran to her when they had lost a child.' 'When you looked into my mother's eyes you knew, as if He had told you, why God sent her into the world—it was to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful thoughts.'[1]

3. The wilderness is doubly peopled. There are angels as well as beasts, for God does not

[1] J. M. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy*, 5.

leave Himself without witness. The tragedy is that so few recognize them. We are assured that the soil which produces every poisonous plant known to botanical science bears also its antidote. In every hedgerow we see the healing docken growing close to the stinging nettle. And it would seem that when the beast draws near to destroy, the angel is at hand to defend. In other words, temptation and the grace to conquer it always come to men together. They may look into the blazing eyes of the beast without quailing, for at hand is their present help. And the keenest joy in life, and its strongest cordial, is successful resistance of temptation in the power of heavenly aid. On every hand we recognize the angels drawing men to goodness and to God. They may be disguised, but they are there. Think of all the friendship in the world. Feel the clinging hands of little children, tugging away at heart-strings as though to pull open closed portals for the entrance of a new life. Linger among the simple joys which spring from thoughtful kindness and generosity—and the world is full of such. And in all these see 'angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to Thee.' Then turning toward Him, how bright is the angel that seems to reside in His written Word, how strong and life-giving the persuasive ministry of His Spirit! Truly, life is for us all a Mahanaim. Around us are the angel hosts.

Repentance

Mark i. 15.—'Repent ye.'

Repentance is everywhere insisted on in the Scriptures as one of the fundamental obligations of true religion. In the New Testament the word usually employed denotes a change of heart and mind, which makes a man see things in a new light, feel new affections, and act in accordance with new principles of conduct. And this experience may be either total or partial. It may be so radical and thorough-going as to transform the character and alter the general outlook and attitude of the soul; or it may be a partial repentance which is called for by a particular sinful act or evil habit.

1. We begin with the wider meaning of repentance as a change of heart which involves, not merely the abandonment of particular sins, but the hatred of sin as sin. It may be thought that Christian people do not seem to have the same sense as formerly of sin as a penetrative and leavening principle, hateful and loathsome in all its forms. At the same time it is an undeniable fact of experience that there are many who feel that the one thing needful for them is a radical change of heart and purpose. There are not a few who have a humiliating and galling sense that their character, and the general tenor and spirit of their life, are unsatisfactory; that they are in bondage, if not to the lusts of the flesh, at least to the tyranny of the world, and the still greater tyranny of their self-love; and who feel that, if they are to attain to true tranquillity of soul, and to rejoice in their life, they must be delivered from the thraldom, and caught up into a world of more spiritual and unselfish aims.

The testimony of those who have experienced this shifting of the centre of their personality is that at bottom it was not an act of their own, but a work of the Spirit of God. By grace they were saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it was the gift of God. It also appears from numerous biographies, of which St Paul's is typical, that many who have been lifted up to the plane of spiritual life have undergone the experience when they were not even seeking it. But, on the other hand, there are numerous cases where the deliverance has followed upon a resolute determination to rise into the truer and purer life. The earliest recorded example is that of Jacob, who wrestled with the angel and cried, 'I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.' We find the same experience repeated in records of the religious life of later times.

¶ 'Last night,' wrote Kingsley, 'my birth-night, I spent an hour upon the seashore, forming determinations which are to affect my destiny through time and through eternity. . . . I am saved from pride, from scepticism, from sensuality, restored to my God.'

Resolution is a prominent feature in the record of Finney the American revivalist, who relates of his conversion—'The question seemed to be, Will you accept Christ now, to-day? I said, I will accept Him, or die in the attempt.' No doubt beneath and behind such resolutions there is an influence of the Spirit of God, but it is well to remember that God may make the

Kingdom approach us in the light of a task to be achieved rather than of a gift to be received.

2. From the subject of the general repentance, which practically coincides with conversion, we pass to the consideration of the duty of repenting of specific sins. Let us first note the two main classes of these particular sins, and then consider the parts or stages of a genuine repentance in regard to them.

(1) One class of particular sins includes acts of wrongdoing of a somewhat heinous kind. The extreme example is a crime. But if none of us have memories haunted by some dark crime, in the fashion which has furnished so much fascinating material to the dramatist and the novelist, it is practically certain that some have been entangled in vice, and have been degraded by surrender to the lusts of the flesh. It is still more certain that if an inquiry were instituted into our past lives, many could call to mind injuries to their neighbour which were somewhat heinous sins either against justice or against love. There are also sins against love which ought to be recalled; and women as well as men may well consider the names of those whom they alienated or made enemies of by unkind or unjust treatment, and who passed out of their lives with indifference or hatred in their hearts.

The second class of sins which call for particular repentance consists of evil habits. The grosser forms are exemplified by the habits of drunkenness and of the impure life, but there are many others which are in the sight of God hardly less of a disfigurement of the soul. There is the deep-seated and all-pervasive habit of making self the point of view from which everything is regarded, and the pivot round which most actions revolve. There is the habit of vanity—apt to grow with the years—which is the root of envy, jealousy, and meanness, as well as a source of constant disturbance of mind. There are the habits of despondency, of a sullen or irritable temper, of a censorious judgment and a bitter tongue. There is the habit of shunning hardship and opposition, and following the line of greatest ease and comfort. The truth is that there are few of us who are not able, in moods of candour and self-insight, to draw up against ourselves a somewhat humbling indictment.

(2) Of the wicked deed and the evil habit men are called to repent particularly, and we have next to distinguish the chief parts or stages of a genuine repentance in regard to them. The first stage is heartfelt sorrow for the sin. This may be expressed with varying degrees of emphasis—from the flood of tears and the sackcloth and ashes of the Oriental penitent, to the inward pang and the bowed head of the restrained Western soul. And here it is important to distinguish two different kinds of sorrow, which are of very unequal spiritual value. One is sorrow for the suffering or loss which a sin may have wrought, and the shame it may have entailed—as when a criminal or a drunkard is merely angry with himself for having played the fool. Instead of exercising a healing and reconciling influence, it may only plunge the soul into deeper depths of gloom and bitterness, and drive it to a greater distance from God. The true contrition is that in which, apart from its consequences, a sin is felt to be hateful because of its wickedness, and, above all, because it is an offence against the goodness of a holy God. 'They that love the Lord will hate evil.' The love itself *is* hatred. It was genuine contrition when Peter went out and wept bitterly.

The second part of a true repentance is confession of the sinful deed or habit. It is our duty to confess our sins to God—in our private prayers—the grave actual sins of which our consciences accuse us, and the evil habits which have established a tyranny in our lives. The twofold use of this is obvious—it is promised that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us; and on the other hand it is impossible for a sincere and self-respecting man or woman to make such confession to God without being impelled to make fresh endeavours after deliverance and victory. It is a controversial question how far, and in what way, the confession of our sins to God should be supplemented by confession to a fellow-man. There is a powerful natural instinct which impels us to seek a confidant in every deep trouble of the soul. The work of confession, and of responsive help in sympathy and advice, is probably overtaken to some extent in the confidences of Christian friendship, but there is doubtless room for a better organization of the efforts which St James had in view within the life of the Church when he counselled confessing faults one to another.

¶ In *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë tells us of Lucy Snow. Poor Lucy is an English governess in Belgium. She is sick and miserable and dreadfully lonely. She hears the bells; enters the old church; finds that the service is over, but that many of the worshippers are lingering, waiting for confession. A craving to confess came over Lucy. A pale lady kneeling near her said in a low, kind voice, 'Go you now; I am not quite prepared.' Mechanically obedient, she rose and went. To take such a step, she reflected, could not make her more miserable; it might soothe. She says: 'The priest within the confessional never turned his eye to regard me; he only quietly inclined his ear to my lips. He might be a good man, but this duty had become to him a sort of form; he went through it with a phlegm of custom. I hesitated; of the formula of confession I was ignorant; instead of commencing with the usual prelude, I said, "*Mon Père, je suis Protestante.*" He inquired, not unkindly, why, being a Protestant, I came to him. I told him I was perishing for a word of advice and comfort. I had been living alone for weeks, had been ill, and had a pressure of affliction on my mind of which it would hardly any longer endure the weight. "Was it a sin, a crime?" he asked, somewhat startled. I assured him on that point, and gave him an outline of my experience. He looked surprised and puzzled, and said, "You take me unawares. I have not had such a case as yours. Ordinarily we know our routine. On no account would I lose sight of you. Go, my daughter, for the present, but return again to me." Of course, I had not expected more. But the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated, had done me good. I was already solaced, and I returned to him no more.'[1]

The third part of a genuine repentance is to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. In relation to actual sins of a heinous kind this takes the form of reparation. A cardinal maxim of the subject is laid down by the King in *Hamlet* —that one does not truly repent if he continues to reap the advantages which he derived from the sinful act. If the sin has been of the nature of a wrong, the duty is to make reparation to the person who was wronged. If a man was formerly a drunkard, the appropriate reparation is to throw himself ardently into the cause of temperance. If he once made a fortune by questionable methods, he may well think no disposition of his ill-gotten wealth so appropriate as to give or bequeath it to some class of the poor who are the victims of social injustice. In the case of a sinful habit, the fruit of a true repentance obviously is that we break off the habit. The end of repentance is amendment of life. But the advice is not easy to act on. Many of us find it extremely difficult to abandon even a secondary habit, and it becomes much more difficult when it is a question of habits such as selfishness, or pride, or temper, or sloth, which have become part of the staple of our character. There are two things we ought to keep in mind. One is that if we are trying to overcome an evil habit we must endeavour by practice and repetition to form a good habit to take the place of the bad one, and the other is that we need a fresh impulse and uplift from the Spirit of God, which is to be sought in humble prayer. There we are urged to place ourselves in fullest accord with the will of Him who died that 'he might redeem us from all iniquity.'

Show pity, Lord:
Our grief is in our sin;
We would be cleansed;
O make us pure within!
We would be cleansed;
For this we cry to Thee;
Thy word of love
Can make the conscience free.

Show pity, Lord:
Inspire our hearts with love,—
That holy love
Which draws the soul above,
That holy love
Which makes us one with Thee,
And with Thy saints,
Through all eternity.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Reel of Rainbow*, 53.

The Expanding Life

Mark i. 17.—'I will make you to become fishers of men.'

Jesus chose His first disciples from the fishermen of Galilee. There were no idlers among those whom He called to follow Him: Matthew from his custom-house, Simon and Andrew, James and John from their nets. They were

all hard-working, busy men. In Jesus' invitation they recognized a higher call to wider fields of service. Their life with Him became an ever-expanding life—a life clarified by a vision of transformed values, vitalized by larger motives, broadened and deepened by wider horizons.

The words of our text are a symbol of the expansion of life wrought by their friendship with Jesus. Hitherto they had been fishermen. Had they never met Jesus, fishermen they would in all probability have remained. They sought no greater riches than they could bring to shore in their little fishing-smacks. The horizon of their lives was bounded by the margin of Galilee, the occasional visit to Jerusalem, and the gossip in the market-places of Greece and Rome. And then one day Jesus came down to the Capernaum beach, and gave a new impulse to the lives of Simon and Andrew and James and John. Straightway their lives began to grow, and new purposes were awakened within them. The old horizons of life were pushed further and further back.

'Fishers of men!' Did you see Him, John,
In the early glow of the morning sun,
And the glory that shone in His face, and His eyes?
He seemed like an angel from Paradise.
And yet like a brother, like one you had known
All of your life, like a friend who had gone
Through storm and sun with you hand in hand.

'Fishers of men!' I can see Him stand
Here in the boat yet. And, John, did you mind
His voice—like the breath of the western wind,
As He told of His Father? John, could it be
He was speaking of God, and of you, and of me?

'Fishers of men!' Is He fisherman too?
And could we be like Him, I and you?
John, I could follow a man such as He
Clear through the gates of eternity.
'Fishers of men!' If He meant me and you,
John, let us go and be fishermen too.

Our text suggests three ways in which the life with Christ becomes an expanding life.

1. When Simon became a disciple Jesus began to transform his sense of values. Things which hitherto he had prized highly began to lose their worth. And other things, to which he had hitherto given but little thought, became priceless. Hitherto the chief values in his life had been the interests of his business.

We may judge a man somewhat by his conversation. What were the subjects most often discussed by these fishermen as they rested after their long night's labour, or exchanged greetings with friends in the market-place? The size of the season's catch of fish; the market price at Taricheæ; the stirring scenes at their last visit to Jerusalem; the latest gossip concerning Herod, and Pilate, and Roman Cæsar. Then came Jesus; and a new standard of values was held before them. 'I will make you to become fishers of men.' Those hated publicans who collected Roman taxes; the sinner and the outcast whom the austere Pharisees avoided like the plague; the despised Samaritan whose very neighbourhood brought defilement—those were the men for whom Jesus invited them to set their nets. The old topics of the market-place were gradually forgotten. And in their place we hear Simon at Pentecost preaching repentance and faith and the Kingdom of God, the joy and peace of forgiveness, and the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Old values were cast aside and new values became regnant in their lives since they were called 'to become fishers of men.'

Jesus has wrought a similar transformation in the values of human society. The challenge of the Master to the fishermen of Galilee to turn their attention from catching fish to catching men is a symbol of the expansion of life that Jesus has wrought. In the world to which He came human values were of little worth. The civilization of Rome was built on human slavery. Men were not citizens but subjects, the chattels of the emperor. The story of the progress of Christianity is the story of the rising worth of human values and the progressive subordination of material wealth. Slavery has been banished. The position of womanhood and childhood has been lifted from degradation and misery to honour and boundless opportunity. Property interests are becoming more and more subordinated to personal and community welfare. The Kingdom of Heaven is coming. The teaching of Jesus is transforming the ideals and the values of the world.

Every individual who becomes a disciple experiences the same transformation of values and

ideals. The objects for which we were striving before lose all their glamour and become sordid and petty in the light of the new vision that He gives. 'I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' How trivial seems to us now the old ambition for personal profit and selfish gratification! For we have heard the voice of the Master calling us 'to become fishers of men.' We have had a vision of the riches of heaven, the incalculable spiritual blessings 'in the heavenly places in Christ.'

¶ H. G. Wells, in one of his novels,[1] relates a curious kind of day-dream experience which he says frequently visited him in youth. 'It was this: The visible world, remaining just as bright and clear as ever it had been, would suddenly appear to be minute. People became midgets, the houses and the furniture, dolls' houses and furniture, the trees, mere moss-fronds. I myself did not seem to shrink to scale; it was only the universe about me that shrank.' His experience illustrates that new outlook on the world and material things which Jesus brings to men.

2. Jesus brought to Simon and his fellow-fishermen a larger and a nobler purpose. Hitherto the chief business of their life had been fishing. From henceforth they were engaged in bigger business. This did not mean that they were to forgo all gainful occupations. We cannot forget that for many years St Paul supported himself and his missionary campaigns by the labour of his own hands. There were some in Thessalonica who were so carried away with the joy of their new-found faith that they ceased to work for a living and became a burden on their brethren. To these St Paul wrote admonishing them to return to their tasks, and forbidding the Church to support any able-bodied men and women in idleness. The world still needed the labour of men's hands. But the task of making a livelihood was no longer the chief end and aim of their existence. The big business of these men's lives became, not the accumulation of wealth, but the building of the Kingdom of God.

This is still the message of Jesus to the world. He came to a world that was all absorbed in the struggle for physical existence, and for the piling up of wealth that could, by its very nature, prove nothing more than a mere transient possession. And His ringing message to men of every generation has been: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' Jesus challenges us to turn our attention from the problem of making a living to that of making a life. For how many of us has life little meaning other than a hard, back-breaking struggle for possession of a little hoard of material things. How much time do we spend in developing our mind, in fostering our capacity to appreciate and enjoy the things that enrich the higher life? And how much less time still do we spend in the cultivation of the spiritual life within, in deepening our faith, and in enlarging our capacity for communion with God?

When Jesus comes into our life, immediately the interests of the Kingdom of God become the major interests of life. The Christian will continue to farm, or to serve his community in the bank, or to build houses, just as he did before. And, if he is true to Jesus, he will be a better workman than he ever was before he heard the Master's call. But in his occupation he now sees not merely a means of making money: he sees in it an avenue of service for His Lord. His life is infinitely more worth while than it was before. There come to him satisfactions that were undreamed of in the past.

¶ In the later years of the war there was printed a little book which Dr Richard C. Cabot, in an introduction printed as its foreword, called 'One of the most intimate and holy things which have been saved for our comfort out of the whirlpool of embattled Europe.' It was the diary of a nurse, and writing from a front-line hospital, with every nerve and fibre taxed to its utmost to cope with the flood of suffering that poured around her, she said, 'Actually for the first time in my life I begin to feel as a normal being should, in spite of the blood and anguish in which I move. I really am *useful*, that is all, and too busy to remember myself, past, present, or future.'[1]

3. The life with Christ is an expanding life, because it is life with ever-widening horizons. Think how amazingly Jesus pushed back the horizons of Simon's life. When first they met by the Galilean Sea Simon's world was a very little world. We would call him provincial in

[1] *The World of William Clissold.*

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Inescapable Christ*, 44.

the extreme. At the most none of these fishermen had probably ever been farther than to Jerusalem once a year. Their whole life was lived within the narrow limits of one of the smallest of Roman provinces. Their horizon was bounded by the margin of the lake on which they sailed their boats. And then came the invitation: 'Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.' And behold how He began to push back their horizons. He taught them to think in terms of the ever-growing Kingdom of God, beginning 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' John became the beloved Bishop of Ephesus. Andrew travelled through all the countries surrounding the Black Sea; Thomas and Bartholomew are said to have journeyed as far as India; and Simon Peter was martyred in Rome.

Jesus is always enlarging the horizons of men. Frequently our interests are confined to the limited circle of family or class with the result that life becomes weak and impoverished.

¶ Galsworthy has given us a revealing picture of this kind of life in the creed of the Pendyce family: 'I believe in my father and his father and his father's father, the makers and keepers of my estate; and I believe in myself and my son and my son's son. And I believe that we have made the country, and shall keep the country what it is. And I believe in the Public Schools, and especially the Public School that I was at. And I believe in my social equals and the country house, and in things as they are, for ever and ever. Amen.' [1]

But when we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus we find that He turns our thoughts and purposes outward from our narrow self-centred life and we become conscious of our neighbours. We begin to think in terms, not of our own rights and privileges, but of our responsibilities and opportunities of service. The circle of our benevolence extends from those who are immediately related to us by ties of blood or friendship and includes our whole community. Then the boundaries are pushed still farther back and we are interested in other communities, in distant parts of our own land; and yet again, our neighbourhood takes in China and India and Africa. World service becomes a challenging opportunity. Every revelation of human need to which we have the power of responding becomes for us an obligation of wider service. So Jesus is constantly pushing back the horizon. For the life with Christ is an ever-expanding life.

[1] John Galsworthy, *The Country House.*

The Authority of Jesus

Mark i. 22.—'He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.'

1. WHO does not know the difference when a man of authority intervenes in a debate? It is not necessary that he should be a man of the front bench. A man may be on the front bench, clad in a little brief authority, yet there may be no authority about the man, or about the word he speaks. The authority which is derived from office is something like the awe which sits upon the judge. It is divested with his ermine robe, and ceases to exist when he steps into the street. Real authority is quite independent of office and station. It is independent of place. A man may rise in the back benches of the House, he may be an unfamiliar presence, he may never have spoken before, yet he may not have spoken for two minutes before the House knows that authority speaks. Was there ever a poorer speaker than the late Duke of Devonshire? His style was unimpressive, his manner was drowsy, he stammered, everything about him was heavy and laborious. Yet somehow or other, when he brought out his cumbrous lantern, there was light on the road. Whether in or out of office, he always spoke with authority. It was born in a deeper realm than that of the intellect, deep down among intuitions of character. With whatever clumsiness he spoke, he was always trafficking with the primitive secrets of life, and always there was something in his word which to his fellow-countrymen seemed to run parallel with the controlling law and order of the universe. It is always so with men of that order. Whenever a man of this order speaks to us, he always unveils a little of the strata of the fundamental constitution of the world. All this may lead us just a little way in the understanding of this contrast between the scribes and our Lord.[1]

The scribes studied an ancient law and amplified the law by precedents in the case of disputed points. When they spoke men recog-

[1] J. H. Jowett.

nized their learning and acuteness, but religion under their governance was tied to an artificial standard. This case had been decided in this way, that had been decided in another; so the schools said, and because men gave a sort of allegiance to the system they accepted the decision, but there was no glowing human consciousness that it was the right thing to do. It was all talk about old cases and sentences with disputed meanings—whether a man had the right to take revenge on a neighbour under this provocation, or whether a man might do this or that on the Sabbath day. It was into this atmosphere that Jesus came, and He came with the embarrassing confidence of the messenger. Precedents were ignored and even the law behind the precedents was dealt with in a radical fashion. 'It hath been said by men of old time . . . but I say unto you.' It is all so simple, so direct and certain as it falls from His lips, and the people were astonished because He taught them with that note of authority. He was not merely a new teacher, He was a messenger.

Across the sea, along the shore,
In numbers more and ever more,
From lonely hut and busy town,
The valley through, the mountain down,
What was it ye went out to see,
Ye silly folk of Galilee?
The reed that in the wind doth shake?
The weed that washes in the lake?
The reeds that waver, the weeds that float?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

What was it ye went out to hear,
By sea and land, from far and near?
A teacher? Rather seek the feet
Of those who sit in Moses' seat.
Go humbly seek, and bow to them,
Far off in great Jerusalem.
From them that in her courts ye saw,
Her perfect doctors of the law,
What is it ye came here to note?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

A prophet! Boys and women weak!
Declare, or cease to rave;
Whence is it he hath learned to speak?
Say, who his doctrine gave?
A prophet? Prophet wherefore he
Of all in Israel tribes?—
He teacheth with authority,
And not as do the scribes.[1]

If we study Jesus as a teacher and try to discover His place among the great teachers of the race, it is still that fact of authority which is bound to impress. It may be a noteworthy thing that, with the insight of an artist, Jesus put His message in the medium which His audience could understand, and that to peasant folk He spoke in parable and simile. That measures His wisdom and skill, and we wonder at the power and beauty of it to this day, for the parables rival all the philosophies. But while that may be the most obvious mark of the teaching of Jesus it is not the deepest and most distinctive. The deepest mark is the authority behind the word. We may read the bulky tomes which fill the libraries of the world and find argument after argument attempting to prove the existence of God, His nature and attributes, His laws and claims. Sometimes the arguments will not bear the structure which is built upon them, sometimes we can mark flaws in the reasoning, but about the ordered succession of thought there is the paralyzing sense of uncertainty. It is argument at a distance. But when we turn to Jesus we find that He has few arguments; He takes the longest steps without showing the reason; He does not discuss about God, He speaks of Him.

¶ We recall the lines of Browning in *Abt Vogler*, where he gives the meditations upon life of the musician:

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

That puts the impression which Jesus made into poetic speech. He was the great musician of life whom God had whispered in the ear, and schemes and reasons fade beside that surpassing certainty.[2]

[1] Clough, *Poems*, 46.
[2] S. M. Berry, *Revealing Light*, 33.

It was an awe-inspiring intimacy with God that held the people in such surprise. It was a first-hand view of God. What did Jesus tell them? What did He say He had seen? A word like this: I have just come from God, and I will tell you what He is like. He is like a shepherd. He is like a shepherd who had lost a sheep, and spent a day and night scouring every ravine, every gully in the mountains, until he found it.

And Jesus went on to talk to them, and He told them about the Father's House, where no one has trouble any more, and about the open way which anybody can find, for it is just where everybody needs it. Then He told them the Father would wash away their stains and their shames and clothe them with eternal garments befitting the children of royal blood. Then He told them that God looked after them like the birds of the air, like the lilies of the field. That is how He talked to them.

Some attempt has been made to diminish the authority of Jesus as a teacher by pointing out that like other men He was a child of His age and therefore limited in knowledge. He did not anticipate later scientific discoveries. For Him what we call epilepsy was possession by evil spirits. Does that limitation in knowledge infringe the authority with which He speaks? Not in the least. Apart from the fact that we may yet find that a disease like epilepsy is attributable to mental or psychical disharmony, that kind of limitation in the knowledge of Jesus does not cast a shadow upon His clear consciousness of God. The two orders of facts are in different categories. If mastery in any sphere of life were to be determined by the possession of the latest information then the only masters would be ourselves.

We stress the point of the authority of Jesus because the question of His teaching is bound up with His authority. Has He the right to stand before men as the messenger of God? Does He infer the Fatherhood of God from the facts of life; does He arrive at it by instinct or intuition or idealism; or does He speak with the note of one who brings a message from afar? When He says that God cares so much for each individual soul that it is not His will that one should perish, is He taking the wings of imagination and building castles in the air, or is He declaring a truth that He knows?

Does Jesus know God with all the immediacy that His words suggest; has He the secret of the life of man and its place in the purpose of things; when He speaks of the life beyond is He merely one of the prophets of hope, or can we take His words in literal truth as He says with absolute candour, 'If it were not so I would have told you'? The teaching and the teacher stand or fall together in a way that is not true of any other. You can discuss the ethics of Muhammad or Buddha without that close association between the words and the speaker, because they never claimed to speak as Jesus did. You can treat the systems of philosophy apart from the philosophers, because they stand on the ground of reason and they can be estimated by reason alone. But Jesus by His own claim comes as a messenger and the question which has to be asked about Him is, Are His credentials true?

2. The question then to which we come is the means we are to take to judge the authority of Jesus. There are two things which are joined together in Him—the highest claim to speak in the name of God Himself, and the largest freedom allowed to man to test that claim at all the points where experiment can verify or disprove it. Authority and freedom are combined in Him. Between one or other of those two extremes religion has swung in the past. There has been the note of authority, and because men dared to assert their freedom of view the Church persecuted and martyred them.

We are far away from those days now and our tendency is to swing to the opposite extreme, to assert our freedom and lose all sense of authority. That may not be a crime, but it is folly. Over all our freedom there is His authority, and to the test of His truth we must all come soon or late.

There are some truths whose verification must wait for a clearer knowledge than this world can supply. We shall never know the truth about some of the teachings of Jesus until we have passed through what Barrie has called 'The awfully big adventure of death.' But there are other parts of the teaching of Jesus which can be tested on this stage of life. We can discover whether the lines He laid down for men make for the enrichment of the individual and of society, whether His revelation of God is attested by growing experience,

whether prayer does bring strength, and trust in God is abundantly rewarded, and forgiveness is better than resentment and love than hate. Behind all these things lies His authority, but they must be put to the test of experience and tried.

¶ Matthew Arnold writes: 'Jesus Christ and His precepts are found to hit the moral experience of mankind; to hit it in the critical points; to hit it lastingly; and, when doubts are thrown upon their really hitting it, then to come out stronger than ever.'

The test of freedom is whether it enables us to come into a closer apprehension of truth and obedience to it. The greatness of Christ as a teacher is that He never attempts to force the spirit of man; men may deny Him and still there are no threats of coercion. For that reason men may come to think that their attitude to Him is not a great matter. But it matters everything that in the atmosphere of freedom we face the greatest issues of life, and decide truly.

The Church and the Home

Mark i. 29.—'When they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house.'

The Church and the home, worship and work, religion and daily life—these things have ever a tendency to dwell apart in our thought and vision. And our failure to bring these things together—the spiritual distance that so often lies between the synagogue and the house—accounts for all our other failure to harmonize and understand the manifold experiences of life. It is very difficult for us to realize the unity of life. We think that we miss seeing it because of the endless and bewildering diversity of human experience. But the true explanation of our inability to unify life lies not in the fact that human experience is thousandfold, but in the fact that it is twofold. Capernaum has gone, and the earth has long since drawn its veil of green over the site of the synagogue where Jesus sat and taught, and of the cottage where dwelt Simon the fisherman; but the synagogue and the house stood for things upon which the years can leave no obliterating dust. They remind us that heaven and earth are ever calling to our hearts, ever laying hands upon our lives. They symbolize the needs of the soul and the needs of the body: the two communions that together fulfil life for every man, fellowship with God and fellowship with humanity. And so as we watch Simon and Andrew, James and John, with Jesus in their midst, making their way down from the synagogue on the hill through the narrow, crooked streets of a little fishing-town to a cottage on the shore we learn something about the oneness of life in Jesus Christ.

1. *In the Synagogue.*—Jesus took His four followers into the synagogue. They had never been present at such a service in all their lives. They had been taken there as boys by their respective fathers, Jonas and Zebedee; and it may be they had been hard put to it to keep some semblance of interest in the niggling and perfunctory homily, full of distinctions without differences, and the glorification of trifles. But that day the Preacher gripped their souls. Deep springs of joy were loosened in their hearts. Such a large, generous, fearless utterance had never before been heard in the synagogue at Capernaum. Law and tradition and ritualism had been preached there for years, but that day a new Preacher had come to Capernaum, and the Preacher's name was Love. And whenever Love preaches, life cannot help listening. And a poor helpless life was saved that Sabbath morning. The quiet of the service was broken by the cry of a man with an unclean spirit. There ought to be something to help that man whenever we gather together in public worship. Some thread of penitence is woven into all true worship. It will be a sad day when the Christian Church forgets that the cry of the man with an unclean spirit has ever been the birth-cry of a new and living worship.

When Jesus went forth to preach, Judaism had become a religion without vision and enthusiasm, without heroism and moral passion, without sympathy, and so without a message that could get home to the heart of a poor devil-mastered man. Then Jesus came—and the same synagogue could not hold Christ and the devil, and never a stir in the atmosphere. And that remains true when the last word has been said about the psychology of conversion and the subtleties of the modern temperament. By all means let us acknowledge that we to-day are less introspective, less subjective, in some ways

less emotional than our forebears ; but all these and kindred considerations do not make us less sinful. Perhaps we have heard enough for a while about the things that change. We must reassure and reconvince ourselves of the things that change not—the all-mastering Christ and the sin-laden soul. Modernity is becoming almost a fetish with us. People clamour for an up-to-date gospel. Why, it is the glory and genius of the gospel that it makes nothing of dates. It is a timeless and eternal power, and it is the power that matters. There are those also of course who make a fetish of the bygone, and they refuse to believe that man can find spiritual freedom without being nearly torn to pieces in the finding of it. They cannot believe in a miracle unless they see a disturbance. But it matters little how the unclean spirit goes out of a man's life, so that it does go.

2. *In the House.*—Let us follow Jesus and His four disciples out again, down the straggling street through the Sabbath sunshine to the little house where there was a fever-stricken woman. And they tell Him of her, and He took her by the hand and the fever left her. The miracle in the synagogue was followed by the miracle in the house. The cottage on the shore became as wonderful a place as the temple on the hill.

' When they were come out of the synagogue.' That is just where the difficulty of life comes in for most of us. These four fishermen stood that morning in the place of worship, and the word of Him who spake as never man spake carried them out beyond the fret and triviality, the weariness and sorrow of their lives. But had they gone down alone to their cottage with the fishing-nets drying in the sun, and with the feeble voice of a sick woman unconsciously taking up the tale of the sorrow and frailty of life, they might have felt, as many do feel, that worship and work are in two different worlds.

¶ Arnold of Rugby said in one of his letters that he was very much dissatisfied with his religious life, because he realized such a change in spirit and attitude when he passed from his private devotions to the common affairs and business of the school.

But Jesus had come to teach men the way from the synagogue to the house. The path of His life lay through them both. In Him the gulf between them was for ever bridged and the difference in their final significance for ever blotted out. It is Jesus Christ who has delivered religion from the tryanny of place and time and form. There has to be a synagogue ; but the value of it for every man who enters it has always been its nearness and its likeness to the house. The value of religion lies not in its contrast with daily life, but in its communion with daily life.

¶ Tolstoy tells a story of a Russian peasant, who, when he ploughed, always set a lighted lamp upon his plough, just such a candle as he offered on Sundays at his favourite altar in the church.[1]

Jesus has made worship something better than a beautiful thing to be with difficulty recalled to help us in life's unlovely places. We talk about coming to God's House and getting away from the moil and pain of things. And that is part of the value of worship. It does bring, at times, a sense of escape. It does record great hours of the soul. But, better still, it teaches us by the grace of an abiding Divine fellowship that the prosaism and unloveliness of life are but the fictions of our blind and unresponsive spirits. We have worshipped as we should when it is easier, and not harder, for us to go forth and answer the call of life. The synagogue is not the place where a man forgets his work : it is the place where he learns what his work is, and how he best may do it. And, as for sorrow—well, if God lets us forget our sorrow for an hour, it is that we may better understand it when we meet it again. There is no profit in being taken out of ourselves, unless we be taken out of ourselves for all and for ever by the strong uplift and unslackening clasp of the Christ who died to save us from all we ought not to be, and lives to make us all we ought to be.

That Sabbath morning in old Capernaum Jesus made it quite clear why they had a synagogue, a thing that both they who ministered and they who worshipped had forgotten. Capernaum had a synagogue because it had that house where a fever-stricken woman lay weak and restless, and many another house where there were little children and sick folk, and the aged, and anxious mothers and toil-wearied bread-winners. Years of formalism and literalism, and the gradual substitution of a political for a spiritual outlook, had loosened the bond between the synagogue and the house.

[1] A. Boyd Scott.

But, had they but known it, those sad-eyed folk, there passed through their streets that day, from the house of prayer to the house of pain, One whose presence in the world meant that never again should religion and daily life stand unrelated or drift apart. He came to make them one; to weave all that is richest in the one into all that is neediest in the other; to make the synagogue a sacrament of help, and the cottage a place of peace, and both part of the great presence-chamber of God's eternal mercy. Through the straggling narrow streets of life we may pass with His companionship in our hearts, as the four passed through the little town of Capernaum long ago. And ever for us, as for them, the promise and power of the synagogue shall work themselves out, prove themselves true over and over again in all the need and burden of the house.

¶ 'I recall,' says Dr Jowett, 'two very strong and gracious testimonies which were paid to the life and character of the late Bishop Westcott. One was by Archdeacon Boutflower: "In the presence of the unseen Westcott met all life, and you could not surprise him out of it." And the other was by Canon Scott Holland: "He read and worked in the very mind in which he prayed." Both testimonies are concerned with the same experience. Bishop Westcott conveyed to his friends the moving suggestion of the Divine presence, because he lived continually in conscious and all-controlling communion with God. When he passed from one thing to another there was no change of atmosphere.'

Christ and Solitude

Mark i. 35.—'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.'

THE last rays of the dying sun saw Jesus moving to and fro among the throng, healing their ills of body and of soul; the grey dawn found Him alone in a solitary place, renewing His strength in the nourishing silence of God.

Again and again it is so recorded; and at times of crisis, as when He chose His twelve apostles, He was wont to spend the whole night in prayer. Such a fact brings Jesus nearer to us, doubly so when we remember that He was 'tempted in all points as we are' and touched with a feeling for our infirmities. The two facts are closely related—that Jesus was terribly tried, terribly taxed, and that He was a man of prayer. There are those who think that they can live without prayer, but Jesus could not do it. Against His practice of prayer all arguments as to its worth are invalid. Jesus did not argue about prayer; He prayed. His escapes into the silence filled His disciples with wonder, and, having followed Him one day, they overheard Him at prayer. What an experience—to hear Jesus pray! Listening, they realized that they did not know even the alphabet of that high art, because, at its best, prayer is not asking for favours: it is a worship of the will of God. No wonder they humbly made request: 'Lord, teach us how to pray.'

1. If Christ felt the need and the refreshment of times of solitude and prayer, can it be doubted that the same are very necessary for us? Many of us, as He did, live not only a busy life, but one in which many demands are made upon our moral and spiritual nature. These demands upon us may be both direct and indirect. They may be definite appeals for our help in the battle with sin and worldliness, calls to us to join in some great and necessary crusade against various powers of evil. To respond to these calls and to take part in the conflict may mean loss of material comforts and benefits to ourselves; but how are we to respond to this call and to persevere in the struggle without that power of self-sacrifice which can only come from communion with Him who sacrificed Himself for the sin of the world? The calls upon our moral strength may also be indirect, and among these we may place the responsibility of constantly setting a good example, and of always living up to a high ideal. How, without constantly obtaining fresh supplies of spiritual strength, can we satisfy these demands? How, unless our own moral courage is kept strong, can we help others to overcome in the day when the stress of temptation is great?

In the rush and hurry, in the bustle and turmoil of everyday life, certain very important factors of life and character are apt to be neglected and overlooked. It is to supply these factors that times of solitude are so essential.

(1) We frequently complain that we have so little time to think. This means that we make little or no opportunity either for self-examina-

tion or for reflection upon the meaning, the purpose, or the progress of life. Life tends to become shallow and mechanical. We go on talking and doing without asking ourselves whether we have a clear ultimate purpose in life to which all our various activities can be legitimately attached and which they tend to promote. We do not stay to consider whether our course is right or wrong, whether it is such as will best enable us to attain what should be life's object. We need, like the captain of a ship at sea, to take regular observations, and by means of some fixed and trustworthy standard, as the sailor by the fixed stars, to determine our exact position, the direction in which we are going, and our rate of progress.

(2) We do not always realize how great is the moral and spiritual 'wear and tear' in life. Many of us are constantly giving out much more than we are taking in, and then quantity is very apt to take the place of quality. What we give out becomes thinner and thinner. We recognize the want of rest and change from mental and physical labour: we know that mind and body require recreation, but how rarely we try to obtain moral and spiritual refreshing. We long for and strive to obtain the fresh air of the sea or the mountains; but what effort do we make, what opportunity do we seek, in order to enjoy the soul-refreshing breezes of God's Holy Spirit blowing upon us from the heights of heaven?

¶ We are too busy, too encumbered, too much occupied, too active! . . . In an inaction which is meditative and attentive, the wrinkles of the soul are smoothed away, and the soul itself spreads, unfolds, and springs afresh, and, like the trodden grass of the roadside or the bruised leaf of a plant, repairs its injuries, becomes new, spontaneous, true, and original.[1]

2. How may we most profitably employ such periods of temporary solitude as it was the custom of our Lord to seek?

(1) First, as opportunities for *self-examination*. The wise, it has been said, are they who have consented to receive the knowledge of themselves. Some courage is needed for a man to face his own soul, but we must get acquainted with ourselves and see what manner of beings we really are.

[1] *Amiel's Journal*, 23

¶ About the time that Jesus was born in the manger a child was born in Cordova, in Spain, who was to be known to the world as Seneca. The more we know of Seneca the more clearly do we feel that he would have been among those of whom Jesus said, 'They shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.' That pagan saint urges upon us the duty and necessity of an honest, fearless, and daily inspection of the house of the soul: 'It is dangerous for a man too suddenly or too easily to believe in himself. Wherefore let us examine, watch, observe, and inspect our own hearts, for we are ourselves our own greatest flatterers. We should every night call ourselves to account. What infirmity have I mastered to-day? What passion opposed? What temptation resisted? . . . O the blessed sleep that follows such a diary! O the tranquillity, liberty, and greatness of that mind that is a spy upon itself and a private censor of its own manners!'

(2) Secondly, as opportunities for *thoughtful study*. Probably many of us read enough; but what do we read, and to what profit? How many of us would like to confess how very short a time we devote to the study of the Bible? The excuse of 'no time' will hardly serve when we think of the time we actually spend in other pursuits.

¶ When Dostoëvsky was sent to Siberia, at the gate of the prison-pen a woman gave him a little New Testament, and it became his bread, his meat, his friend. Living with that little book, sleeping with it under his pillow, reading it in the dawn when his fellows slept, thinking his way back into the Mind of Christ—by this means he not only saved his sanity but came out of 'The House of the Dead,' as he called it, a different and better man.

(3) Thirdly, as opportunities for *prayer*, for coming as close to God as we possibly can, for really spiritual and personal communion with Him. No one would for a moment disparage the value of public and united prayer; but private prayer is as essential as common prayer. To-day the rush of life has entered into the religious as into every other sphere, and consequently there is a danger of even our devotional life becoming shallow, thoughtless, mechanical.

Prayer is not a meaningless function or duty to be crowded into the busy or the weary ends

of the day, and we are not obeying our Lord's command when we content ourselves with a few minutes upon our knees in the morning rush or late at night when the faculties, tired with the tasks of the day, call out for rest. God is always within call, it is true; His ear is ever attentive to the cry of His child, but we can never come to know Him if we use the vehicle of prayer only as we use the telephone —for a few words of hurried conversation. Intimacy requires development. 'The goal of prayer is the ear of God,' a goal that can be reached only by patient and continued and continuous waiting upon Him, pouring out our heart to Him and permitting Him to speak to us.

¶ 'Prayer,' says Dr Russell Maltby, 'is not now a matter of steady habit, and a great many people have reduced communion until it is below subsistence level. That is why desires are faint and spiritual realities grow dim. The sovereign remedy is, as of old, to enter into our inner chamber and shut the door, and pray to our Father who is in secret. But if the thirty minutes dwindles to ten, and the ten to five, until at last we come to sixty seconds of hurried petition, the door not shut in case anyone calls, our eyes on the clock and our hat in our hand, God Himself cannot keep us in health on these terms.'

No busier worker ever walked the earth than Jesus during the days when He journeyed through Galilee and Judea, teaching, healing and blessing the multitudes. But diligent as He was, thronged by crowds of the curious, the critical and the needy, His life was never feverish, never flurried, never fretful. If sometimes He was too busy to take food, He kept inviolate His times of retirement, when, alone with His Father, He found strength and poise and patience for His tireless ministry. If we would follow Him we must go with Him into the silent places, whence He emerged renewed and with the light of victory in His face and the note of power in His word.

The Universal Quest

Mark i. 37.—'All men seek for thee.'

Some men are greatly impressed by the spectacle of numbers, and Mark seems to have been very much under that peculiar influence. Again and again he refers, with a particular gladness, to the popularity of his Master. 'And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the regions round about Galilee.' 'And all the city was gathered together at the door.' 'And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.' 'But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.'

'All men seek for thee.' We understand these words to-day much better than Mark did when he wrote them. They have an even greater significance than he at that moment suspected. Some men in this world are not wanted at all. They live obscure lives, and when they die you might write for their epitaph what was written for the epitaph of one of the kings of the Old Testament—'he departed, not being desired.' Some, again, have a character for a generation, and are popular for an age. But there came a Man who met the aspirations of all men. And we may say of Jesus Christ to-day that He is the desire of the nations, that all great ideals must be realized in Him.

1. The life and teaching of Jesus are now the generally accepted standard of moral worth. That is not seriously questioned by any influential writer of our day. And this estimate is not confined to Christendom. It is held by more than one school of thought in India. Confucians who read and think—and the number of these in China is steadily growing —many of them have not hesitated to acknowledge that the teaching of Jesus is superior to that of the great sage whose name they bear. Selections from the sayings of Jesus are memorized in the public schools of heathen Japan, where all school-books are published under government auspices. The moral greatness of Jesus forces recognition. The human mind and heart instinctively respond to its appeal. And of the great multitude who bow before Him as the most illustrious of ethical teachers, there are many who are led to see and acknowledge His higher claim, and take up His Cross and follow Him.

¶ The Russians have a legend to account for the origin of song. They say that in the beginning of the world the god of song came from the

sky and sat on a mountain-top and all creatures listened. Every part of creation caught a bit of the music. The woods learned their rustle and the waters their roar. The wind took up the shriller tones, and the birds caught the prelude of the song. Every part of creation caught a bit of the mighty music. But only man grasped it in its fullness and in its beauty. So the spirit of truth came to the world in the very morning of time, and all men caught some fragment of his utterance. Melchizedek, Moses, Zoroaster, Confucius, all caught some. But only Jesus Christ took the music in all its fullness, and spoke as never man spake.

¶ The Hindu professor of modern history in a South India college said to me, 'My study of modern history has shown me that there is a Moral Pivot in the world to-day, and that the best life of both East and West is more and more revolving about that centre—that Moral Pivot is the person of Jesus Christ.' [1]

2. Or take the social problem, never more urgent than it is to-day. Social reformers of all shades speak of Jesus with respect. Christ is claimed as the foremost champion of that unselfish consideration of others which is the only true communism. One of the popular cries of present-day socialism is 'Back to Christ!' Back to the peasant artisan, the fearless reformer, the plain north-countryman who scandalized the spiritual leaders of His day by His scathing denunciation of shams. Need we fear that cry? Do we not believe, as well as those who raise it, that the solution of all our social problems, the reconciliation of capital and labour, the ending of class warfare, lies with Christ? Certainly when the principles of His teaching have been universally accepted that will mean the abolition of scandalous poverty on the one hand, and of selfish accumulation of wealth on the other. That both are wrong is being every day more fully recognized, and its recognition makes for the ultimate triumph of Christianity.

¶ Nearly all the Labour men I know believe that Jesus is the only infallible Guide to life, the only Saviour of society, and they would build their movement on this just, reasonable and Christian basis: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his need.' [2]

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, 245.
[2] Quo-Usque, *Have We Lost Our Way*, 85.

¶ The late Keir Hardie said: 'If I were a thirty years' younger man, I would methinks abandon house and home, and wife and child if need be, to go forth amongst the people to proclaim afresh and anew the full message of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. Brothers, preach anew the Kingdom of God upon earth, not something visionary away yonder in the clouds beyond the dawn, but something living here and now. Could we but inspire a sufficient number of men and women literally to give up the world that they might follow Christ, the world could yet be saved.'

3. Again, if we turn to the literature of the day, we shall find that Jesus is its most outstanding figure. The whirr of the printing-press was never so loud; yet the sheets that are professedly religious stand to-day in unprecedented proportion to the gigantic total. The number of theological writers was never as large, and is growing in growing ratio. But also in books and magazines, in weeklies and dailies, that are not definitely or professedly religious, Christ is far from being ignored. His claims are not passed by as they were wont to be, even within living memory. If we read our newspaper leaders, we shall find that here also this holds good. The whole trend of public opinion is in the same direction. And the cry is rising every day louder and clearer as it enters into the sympathetic ears of the living and exalted Christ, 'All men seek for thee!'

4. Jesus Christ is being hailed, as never before, as the one great need of human life, the conscious or unconscious desire of every human heart. This is what really lies at the root of this universal drawing towards the incarnate Son of God. And what is the explanation? It lies in the fact that Christ is better understood in our day than ever before. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die.' But there is the more spiritual signification of this Messianic utterance. What has been needed all down the Christian centuries, and what marks out the present day from all the past, is the lifting up of Jesus Christ from the earth. Christ upon the Cross may be made the most earthly and degrading of all presentations of Him; as witness the loathsome pictures of physical suffering with which we are all

familiar, completely hiding His deepest agony, and obscuring the spiritual significance of His death. And so in this day of ours, when Christ is being lifted higher than ever from all that is earthly and sensual, His disciples may say to Him, in the fullness of joy that comes to them in the wider and truer recognition of His claims, 'Master, all men seek for thee!'

Yet it is upon the Cross that Jesus exercises His most powerfully attractive force. Neither by His words nor by His works does He most irresistibly draw men to Himself. The beauty of His character might rather repel us were that all that we could find in Him. Its well-rounded perfection would but mock our deformity. His teaching, again, would be of little value to us if it stood alone, for we could never translate it into our lives.

¶ The late Welsh poet, Sir Lewis Morris, called the ethical principles of the Sermon on the Mount 'sweet, impossible precepts.' And it is probable that they are 'impossible precepts' for all who lack the permanent inspiration that comes from a living and heroic faith in God.

Nor is it even the sympathy of Jesus that draws men to Him most powerfully. To have a conscious share in that sympathy needs a measure of spiritual perception, some experience of His fellowship. The most powerful attraction, that which leads most men to seek for Him, is the need that exists in every heart for that which He alone can supply, and the unrecognized consciousness of that need. For in Him there is not only the solution of the social problem, but the power to impart that Divine spirit of unselfishness, the spread of which in the community will bring about the triumph of righteousness, and the universal reign of peace and comfort. There is not only a transcendent moral beauty in Him, but the power necessary for the attainment of that ideal. There is not only the highest enactment, the most spiritual interpretation of the Divine law, but the satisfaction of Divine justice for its past infringement; without which satisfaction 'new obedience' can have no value.

The Revealing Touch

Mark i. 41.—'Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him.'

'"Behold the servant of the Lord" might be the motto of this Gospel,' says Alexander Maclaren, 'and "he went about doing good, and healing," the summing up of its facts.' The Evangelist omits many things found in the other Gospels which involve the idea of dignity and dominion, while he adds to the incidents which he has in common with them not a few fine and subtle touches to heighten the impression of our Lord's toil and eagerness in His patient loving service. Perhaps it may be an instance of this that we find more prominence given to our Lord's touch as connected with His miracles than in the other Gospels, or perhaps it may merely be an instance of the vivid portraiture, the result of a keen eye for externals, which is so marked a characteristic of this Gospel. Whatever the reason, the fact is plain that Mark delights to dwell on Christ's touch.

Now touching is a very ordinary action. We touch a thousand things each passing day. We do not prepare ourselves for touching things as we do for the greater hours of our life. Yet in the touch of Jesus, instinctive and spontaneous, how much of His glory we discover! Let us think, then, of the Master's touch, that in this common ordinary action we may have some revelation of the Lord.

1. Christ's touch *revealed His sympathy*. How beautifully that comes out in the story of the leper! That wretched man had long dwelt in his isolation. The touch of a friend's hand or the kiss of loving lips had been long denied him. Christ looks on him, and the spontaneous impulse of pity breaks through the barriers of legal prohibitions, and of natural repugnance, and leads Him to lay His hand on him.

True pity always instinctively leads us to seek to come near those who are its objects. A man tells his friend some sad story of his sufferings, and while he speaks, unconsciously his listener lays his hand on his arm and, by a silent pressure, tells his sympathy. So Christ did with these men—not only in order that He might reveal God to us, but because He was a man, and therefore felt ere He thought. Out flashed from His heart the swift sympathy, followed by the tender pressure of the loving hand—a hand that tried through flesh to reach spirit and come near the sufferer that it might succour and remove the sorrow.

Christ's pity is shown by His touch to have this characteristic of true pity, that it overcomes disgust. All real sympathy does that.

Christ is not turned away by the shining whiteness of the leprosy, or by the eating pestilence beneath it; He is not turned away by the marble hand of the poor dead girl, or by the fevered skin of the old woman gasping on her bed. He lays hold on each, the flushed patient, the loathsome leper, the sacred dead, with the all-equalizing touch of a universal love and pity, which disregards all that is repellent and overflows every barrier and pours itself over every sufferer.

¶ The following story was told to a friend by Lady Kinnaird a few weeks before her death:

The Prince of Wales was asked one day if he would visit a private hospital where the patients were thirty-six men so seriously injured and disfigured in the War that they could never hope for release. He went, and having been shown round the beds was conducted to the doors.

Suddenly the Prince stopped and said: 'I was told you had thirty-six patients. I have seen only twenty-nine.' It was explained to him that the seven other patients were so tragically disfigured that the visit to their ward was purposely omitted. 'For my sake or theirs,' he asked. 'For yours, sir,' was the answer.

At once he insisted on seeing those seven men. He was ushered into the ward where they lay, and at each bed he stopped for some minutes, saying cheering words and thanking each man in the name of England for his self-sacrifice.

Then, once again, he paused at the door. 'But there are only six men here,' he persisted. 'Where is the seventh?' He was told that nobody could see the seventh man. Blind, deaf, maimed, and disfigured out of the likeness of humanity, this seventh man (they told him) lay in a bed in a room to himself from which he would never stir.

'You must not see him, sir,' said one of the officials.

'I must see him,' said the Prince.

'Better not, sir. You can do him no good. And the sight is terrible.'

'Still, I wish to see him.'

One member of the staff accompanied the Prince into that little darkened room of unutterable tragedy. He relates that the Prince walked firmly to the bedside, that he turned very white, but stood there with bowed head, looking at the man who could neither see him nor hear him, looking at that awful wreck of manhood as though he would see the final anguish of murderous and monstrous war.

Then, very slowly, the Prince stooped down and kissed the man's face.[1]

2. His touch *revealed His large authority*: it was a quietly commanding touch. That emerges, with quite singular vividness, in St Luke's story of the widow of Nain. When He met that procession, outside the city gates, the first thing He did was to address the mother. Christ has always a cheering word to say, even in hours when other lips are dumb. And then Luke tells us that He touched the bier, and immediately the whole procession halted. He did not argue or discuss the matter. Apparently He did not speak one syllable to the men who were carrying the coffin. It was His touch that was authoritative. It was His touch that had commanding power—and His touch has commanding power to this day. How many a drunkard has that touch stopped, when heading straight for a dishonoured grave! How many a woman has that touch stopped, when she was squandering the possibilities of womanhood! The touch of the blessed Lord reveals His sympathy, but sometimes it does more even than that. It reveals the range of His Divine authority.

¶ Colonel Gardiner, the noble Covenanter who fell fighting at the battle of Prestonpans, was living the life of a libertine in Paris, and had gone to a house there to keep an assignation, when he was suddenly arrested by a 'vision' of Christ hanging on the Cross. He left the room dazed and stunned and, as it proved, an entirely changed man. All his ideals were purified, and especially the sensuality in which he had formerly lived became an abhorrence to him.[2]

3. His touch *revealed His restfulness*. 'Come unto me and I will give you rest.' Is not the restful touch exhibited very beautifully when there was sickness in the house of Peter? Simon's mother-in-law was down with fever—of what particular kind we do not know. Her pulse was racing and her head was aching, and she was restlessly tossing on her couch. And then, we read, the Saviour came and touched her, and immediately the fever left her. The

[1] A. D. Belden, *When Power Comes*, 136.
[2] W. Mackintosh Mackay.

'storm was changed into a calm' in the house of Peter as on the sea of Galilee. Instead of uneasy tossing there was peace. The infinite restfulness of Jesus flowed out through the very act of touching, and the touch itself conveyed what it revealed. There are people whose touch is wonderfully restful. That is one sure mark of a good nurse. There are people who can calm us by a touch, just as others by a touch can irritate. But the touch of Jesus is unequalled, in the 'fitful fever' of this life, for conveying the restfulness of God.

4. Again, His touch *revealed His uplifting power*: we see that in the case of Jairus' daughter. When He went in the little maid was sleeping—they called it death, but Jesus called it sleep. For Him *death* meant something far more awful than the closing of those childish eyes. Then He touched her—took her by the hand—and the Gospel tells us that the maid arose: it is the elevating power of His touch. On Goldsmith's monument these words are written—*nihil tetigit quod non ornavit*. They mean that within the realm of literature he touched nothing that he did not adorn. Outside literature that is not true of Oliver. He had a touch which often tarnished things. It is only true universally of Jesus. He touched water, and the water became wine, and the wine became the symbol of His blood. He touched the lilies, and their scarlet robes grew more beautiful than those of Solomon. He touched language, and common words like *talent* were lifted up from the bank into the brain. He touched Simon, and Simon became Peter. What sin touches it defiles. What the devil touches he degrades. Everything that Jesus touches is lifted up to higher, nobler levels. Of all which we have a sign and symbol when in Jairus' house, that day, He took the maid by the hand, and she arose.

¶ In one of his *Saturday Papers*, entitled 'A Roman Penny,' T. R. Glover points out that the fact that our Lord once held in His hand such a coin bearing the image of Tiberius Cæsar sent up the value of all the pennies of Tiberius hundreds of years afterwards.

'Suppose that the little silver coin in the collection had been the identical penny which they produced when He said, "Show me a penny," which lay in His hand and over which that great sentence was spoken! To speak commercially what would it have been worth in the market, with the Vatican eager to have it, and the British Museum advancing a patriotic plea, and perhaps others making offers too? The prospect beggars imagination! And all this because *He* touched it! Why should Jesus of all people send values up?

'He does; and not only in the circles of collectors. I have known of property rising in value because a vacant lot near by was bought by a group of His followers to build a church. But far more interesting are other instances.

'Is it not remarkable how Jesus sends up the value of people whom He touches? And this not in price-lists, for they are seldom put there; and not for collectors' reasons, for the people whom He touches are not put in museums; they are not curiosities, and they are not "scarce," as catalogues say. They are constantly to be met, and the rise in value is one that everybody can recognize. As St Paul tells his friends in Corinth: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The touch of Christ raised the collectors' value for the coin; it raised the real and inherent worth of these people—and of a great many more. This is plain history.'[1]

Sickness of the Soul

Mark ii. 3.—'And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.'

1. In the story of the paralytic we have a warrant, in the teaching of Jesus, for regarding certain sicknesses of the body as due to sickness of the soul. This is not true because Jesus says so; Jesus says it, and acts upon it, because it is true. Therefore a name like 'Christian Science' is a misnomer. Science is neither Christian nor un-Christian. It is either true or false.

The outstanding fact in this story is that Jesus recognized swiftly that this man's physical need could only be met by the satisfaction of a deeper need than he himself or his friends were conscious of. There was a sickness of the soul. How that soul-sickness had come about we do not know. He had evidently done some wrong. What the wrong thing was we do not know. The disease need not have been the

[1] P. 16.

fruit of sensual indulgence. He may at the moment have had no conscious recollection of any wrong thing. What wrong he had done he may have buried in the past; he had forgotten it.

Buried in the past? The popular notion of the past is that it is a region out of which we have moved; with which we need not necessarily have anything more to do. This man, like many another, did not know that in God's universe there are no rubbish-heaps where our wrong-doings can be shot. They remain lying in the hidden abysmal deeps of our own personality. We carry these forgotten experiences of the past about with us. The teaching of modern science is that they are not dead and done with; that the output of mental energy required to persuade ourselves that they are—often unconsciously exercised—is itself a serious drain on the general energy needed for spiritual and physical control. These so-called 'forgotten' things are septic centres in our spiritual life and outlook. We do not know why we are cynical, jealous, irritable, or depressed. Often, also, these unconscious influences produce evil physical effects, nervous prostration, paralysis of physical power.

We must, however, guard ourselves against the assertion that all disease is the fruit of personal wrong-doing; or that all disease, including organic, will yield to spiritual treatment. That certain mental conditions can ultimately induce certain forms of organic disease is certain. It is not the same thing to say that organic disease so induced can be cured by dealing with the mental condition. What can be definitely asserted is that in all healing, spiritual and religious influences must now have a place.

¶ Dr Hyslop, the superintendent of the Bethlehem Royal Hospital, remarked, at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association in 1905: 'As an alienist, and one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all hygienic measures to counteract disturbed, sleep-depressed spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a distressed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer.'

The man in our story lay on his pallet, helpless and dependent upon his friends. His whole shattered nervous system had to stand the strain of the lifting, and pulling, and lowering needed to lay him at the feet of Jesus. One wonders whether, for such a case as his, these unwonted movements were merely torture, or whether they provided a stimulus to the nervous system not unfavourable to the cure. However that may be, his friends apparently had the determination, and the faith. Jesus saw 'their faith,' not his; for apparently he had none. Instead, He looked down with an irresistible Divine intuition into the forgotten depths of the man's soul, and from that depth the man looked up. And Jesus said, 'Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.'

Lord, from the depths to thee I cry'd.
My voice, Lord, do thou hear.

Jesus' words were themselves a quickening of memory. He knew not whence all that disorder and depression of soul had come which for long he had attributed to growing weakness of body. He knew the meaning of that bitterness of rebellion which physical suffering had brought, and which itself had produced this physical collapse. Jesus reverses the order of all his thoughts. He was ill and weak, he thought, therefore God had forsaken him. Really the conviction that God was against him, and had either permitted or imposed his suffering, was the cause of his illness, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

2. What shall we say of the answer of Jesus to the hostility of the Pharisees present? Apparently their chief preoccupation was not with the question of a possible healing miracle, but with the claim that was involved in Jesus' words: 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

It is important to note the significance of Jesus' answer. Very often, in interpretations of this story, commentators have seen in the healing miracle that follows only an illustration and a proof, before the eyes of His opponents, that His claim to forgive sins is really a valid one. 'That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,' 'I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.' It is usually assumed that here are described two separate Divine acts, in answer to two separate needs which the man had: one, the need of forgiveness, the other—the need of which he was conscious—of bodily

healing. We may, however, ask ourselves again, why Jesus, in His defence, lays such emphasis on the word 'say.' 'Whether is it easier to *say* to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to *say*, Arise . . . walk?' The meaning can only be that the former utterance appears to His opponents to be a mere empty claim. The words sounded not only blasphemous, but futile. In their own minds, following the lines of the conventional thinking on such matters, they traced the man's physical condition to a judicial act of God. There was no psychological connection for them between the *sense* of God's disfavour and the physical condition. God had simply shown His antipathy to a sinner by thus afflicting him. The connection between sin and suffering was to them an arbitrary connection, founded on the sheer will of God.

In answer to this, Jesus seeks to convince them that the promise of forgiveness is no mere utterance that wastes itself in air, but that the words are actually followed by a physical result, which could not have taken place unless their full meaning had been realized in the man's own consciousness. He is seeking to do much more than give a palpable illustration, represented in the bodily healing, of the effect of His words. He does not seem to mean, 'A result follows clearly in one case; surely then in the other.' Rather He means that the cure *is* the actual result of an acceptance of forgiveness on the man's part.

The paralytic man was conscious that Nature was against him. We are all familiar with the way in which such a thought would be expressed to-day. Nature is a blind unconscious force, mechanical in its operation. There is a fate in human action, a fate in human character. The world to-day is full of men and women who have made up their minds that moral advance is either impossible, or that it proceeds at such a slow pace as practically to be negligible. Forgiveness, as things are, is a delusion. Nature, men say, never forgives, and Divine forgiveness is largely taken for granted, if thought of at all. '*C'est son métier*,' as Heine said. There is often—even in the utterances of the bravest souls who have lost religious faith, and glorify the courage displayed in facing life's shocks and menaces—a certain defiance which is far removed from that victorious 'Peace be unto you' which was our Lord's legacy to men.

> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced, nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody but unbow'd.

While we must recognize the nobility of such a mood, Henley's whole poem, so characteristic of the human ideal of to-day, quivers with the nervous energy of one who seeks to forget pain by an act of will. It is a series of 'complexes' woven into the form of lyric poetry.

R. L. Stevenson criticises a spurious kind of 'resignation,' which he describes as 'the cowardice that apes a kind of courage, and that lives in the very breath of health-resorts.' 'The man can open the door . . . he can be a kind of man after all, and not merely an invalid.' Most of us will agree that unless this heroism is to be captured and dominated by a religious faith which makes it certain that pain and death have not really the final word in the contest, serious reaction through failure is bound to come. The religious motive must pervade the modern tireless struggle against pain and disease.

Forgiveness of sins means that God is our Friend, and stronger than all that makes us afraid. This assurance that God is our Friend, ever and continually, has certain definite results in human life. Our message of forgiveness is not futile. The most deadly kind of opposition to the Christian faith is the idea that it can be ignored. It has unique results in human character, in society; even in our own bodily health. Even where suffering still remains or death enters, we are encouraged to believe that our Father's love can ensure that these will work out His precious purposes. The Christian is not dismayed by unanswered prayer. We must ever say, 'If it be thy will'; but never with the suspicion or the fear that 'He will not.'

¶ Dr John Brown once said, after hearing Dr Candlish preach on prayer at St George's: 'It was splendid; he first made you feel that you could ask for anything, a five-pound note, and then he dared you to have any overmastering wish, but, "Thy will be done."'

It is the assurance that we are here and now, in trials and difficulties and sufferings—in a Father's house—and children of God—that we need to-day. It is only in a home that children are in the habit of asking for anything; it is only in a home that they learn the meaning of refusals. Jesus opens the door of the Father's

home and the Father's heart when He says, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'

3. There is a surprising absence of any conditions in Jesus' offer of forgiveness. There is no encouragement given to the question that arises in our minds, 'Was it not only by His death that Jesus brought forgiveness to men?' Jesus did not in His Cross make forgiveness possible: He made it credible. Both natural law—the natural environment of His day—and the sin of men conspired to slay His love: and Love triumphed over both. At what cost, the Cross shows; but 'it was not for Jesus to magnify the cost; rather to magnify the freedom of the gift.' God forgives, the Father forgives. No mist of shame, or fear, or doubt, can dim for us that one radiant truth for which Jesus stood. No disabling sense of law can destroy our freedom. That accepted by the imprisoned soul is simply all that He stood for or cared to stand for. Without Jesus, forgiveness on this scale is incredible. 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'

Vicarious Faith

Mark ii. 5.—'And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven' (R.V.).

THE vividness of the narrative makes it easy for us to picture the scene—the sunlit street of Capernaum; the brightly-coloured crowd of peasants pressing in at the door; within, either in the large upper room, or in the cool courtyard, the Prophet standing and speaking His wonderful words to the company of Scribes and Pharisees who had come from the surrounding villages to test the new teaching; the crowd eager to hear their teachers taught, or to see some wonder wrought; the four men arriving late with their poor pitiful burden of the paralytic on his bed, bearing it, in the invincible determination of love and hope, up the outer staircase to the roof, and hurriedly making an opening in the roof: the sudden appearance of the bed let down before the speaker, interrupting His words, challenging His compassion.

¶ The Syrian roof is constructed as follows: The main timbers which carry the roof covering are laid across, horizontally, at intervals of about two to three feet. Crosswise over the timbers are laid the *khasheb* (sticks long enough to bridge the spaces between) quite close together. Over the *khasheb* reeds and branches of trees and thistles are laid, and the whole is covered with about twelve inches of earth. The dirt is rolled down by a stone roller and made hard enough to 'shed water.' In many houses during the summer season an opening, called *qafa'a*, is made in the roof for the purpose of letting down the grain and other provisions which are dried in the sun on the housetop. The space between the timbers admits easily the large basket called *sell*, which is as big around as a bushel basket. Those who let down the palsied man either made an entirely new opening in the roof, or simply extended the *qafa'a* enough to admit the unfortunate man in his folded quilt or thick cushion, tied by the four corners.[1]

Amid the chilling unbelief of the time the scene here depicted must have been to the Master a sight as pleasant as it was unexpected, and He spoke the words of forgiveness. 'Jesus seeing *their* faith said unto the sick of the palsy thy sins are forgiven.' The paralytic received both the forgiveness of his sins and the healing of his body through the loyalty and faith of the friends who brought him.

1. Vicarious faith begins by making the needs of another its own. The affliction of the child is the continual grief of the parent. 'If thou canst do anything for *us*,' was the plea of the distracted father. 'Have mercy on *me*,' was the cry of the mother whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. The sins of others become a personal burden, and the sorrows of others a personal grief, before faith vicariously pleads and claims. However startling it may seem, this man received the forgiveness of his sins through the faith of others. Is that heresy? Is not personal faith the one essential condition of salvation? It is true no man can be saved by proxy, but it is also true we are saved vicariously. If some one had not believed for us it is not likely we should ever have believed for ourselves. We were prayed for before we began to pray for ourselves. The Christian is begotten of God through the travail of some believing person. There is a human as well as a Divine element in the process of soul-birth, and every man's salvation begins in the faith of another. Experience everywhere bears

[1] A. M. Rihbany, *The Syrian Christ*, 192.

witness to this. There are many Christians who cannot trace their experience of regeneration to any definite occasion or influence. Such are to be congratulated, for as a rule the beginnings of spiritual life with them are among the unrecognized and forgotten influences of childhood. People, however, who come to this knowledge in maturer years, are able to trace their spiritual lineage, and to point out the influences that brought them into the Kingdom. The Apostles speak of those who owe to them their own souls, because they were begotten of them in the gospel. So it is still.

Vicarious faith never despairs. It seeks desperate cases, and delights to bring the palsied to the feet of Christ. The saddest thing in Christian workers is that they despair so soon. Whole areas are regarded as hopeless, and are abandoned for more favourable districts. Individuals are given up and left alone because it is thought to be useless to seek their salvation. Until the Church has an undaunted and unquenchable faith in the possibility of every man's salvation it will neither raise the dead nor cast out devils.

2. How often the Apostle Paul entreats the prayers of his spiritual children! In one place he is confronted with a closed door, and is forbidden to preach the gospel, and he requests the prayers of the Christians that the door may be opened. In another case there is an open door, but there are many adversaries, and he asks them to pray that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. The power of such prayer may be gathered from the promise of Christ to His people. 'Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' Could any promise be more absolute? And yet the condition expressed in the agreement of two disciples goes deeper than at first appears. There is nothing arbitrary or mechanical in the conception. It is more than a mere contract; it is an agreement of soul. The word in the Greek means 'to sound together like the answering note in musical instruments.' A note struck on the piano will call forth a response from whatever is tuned to the same pitch. In wireless telegraphy, the sound-wave travels through the ether till it meets its answering note that can read its mystery, and receive its message. Such agreement assumes that the two have been brought into harmony by a common intelligence for a common purpose. We cannot pray and believe to order. Faith is possible only where the truth finds an answering note in the soul. Neither is there anything arbitrary in prayer. It is possible to pray only as the Spirit inspires in the soul correspondence to the will of God. When two are yielded to His absolute control, they find themselves in harmony with each other because both are in obedience to His will. Sympathetic hearts find themselves in agreement, and together they plead at the Father's throne.

¶ 'At the Southport Convention of 1896,' writes Mr Chadwick, 'the leaders met under the shadow of a great sorrow. Its President had been ill for most of the year, and had come to the Convention in great bodily weakness. He had completely lost his voice, and had not spoken in anything more than a whisper for months. Doctors with one consent declared he could never preach again. At one of the daily meetings of the speakers for prayer, without any arrangement or request, the prayers centred in the President. With one consent prayer was made that he might be restored, and that his voice might return. Within twenty-four hours he addressed an assembly of nearly two thousand people, and has continued to preach unto this day.'

Faith reaches the perfection of its power in vicarious exercise. It seems in its concern for others to attain a Divine quality and to command Divine power. So long as it is centred upon personal interests it is held in leash, but when it gets away from self, and is baptized with the God-like spirit of vicariousness, it rises to the fullness of its power, and commands the resources of the Eternal.

For what are men better than sheep or goats . . .
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them
friend.

3. What does this story teach those who are seeking to bring others to the Master? These four men found that their work was beset with difficulties, as such work always is, and to watch their faith overcome will do much to sustain faith. The first difficulty was with the man. He was palsied and unable to walk. One man's

sympathy, determination, and faith were unequal to the task. What was impossible to one, however, was possible to the united effort of four. Faith binds men and unites their powers for a common purpose. Instead of brooding over the indifference and unbelief of the many, it seeks the fellowship and co-operation of those like-minded. It does not wait for the consent and applause of men, neither does it exhaust itself in discussion and scheming; it sees the work and does it, leaving others to discuss and criticize. Faith works, as well as believes.

The real difficulties of these four men began when they got their man to the Church door. When they reached the house where Jesus was the way was blocked; and in many places it is still blocked. The difficulty is not so much to get the outcast to come where Jesus is, but to get the people who are gathered about His Name to receive them. The house to which they came was blocked because it was full, but there are many Churches, empty enough inside, that are blocked in the door-way against the disreputable. In many places the greatest hindrance is in Christian people. To be opposed from within is a severe trial to earnest faith. When you have succeeded in getting the man to the door he is not welcomed.

What is the duty of the earnest worker in the presence of such a spirit? It is to follow the example of these men. They stuck to their task. Any weakling can resign. The man of faith holds on, keeping his mind on his task and his eye on the Master. If one way fails, he goes quietly round and tries another. When all the ordinary ways have been proved impossible he then makes a new one. Tear up the roof, make a new departure; never mind tradition and criticism; do something costly, disturbing, and startling. Nobody likes to make a disturbance, but it may be necessary; anything to get any number of people to the Master. When the poor woman was sweeping up her room to find the piece of money that was lost, she must have kicked up a lot of dust in sweeping, but she found it. Now we must never make a disturbance for the sake of disturbing; but if we want to get any society—the Church—to the Master's feet, it may be necessary sometimes to do extravagant things.

The Pharisees were angry but Christ was pleased. He admired the courage of these men, their inventiveness, their perseverance, and no doubt approved the social and economic value of their work; but the thing that was precious to Him was their faith.

The Priesthood of Innocence

Mark ii. 10.—'The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.'

A FEW years ago an American authoress, attempting to write a Life of Christ, assured us that when Jesus said, 'The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,' He was speaking simply as a man—'a fraction of that close-woven human fabric of which He at all times warmly felt Himself a part.' It was as if He had said, 'This man—this son of the human race—has power to forgive.'

Can it possibly be so? Is there any truth in such a point of view? Of course, one man, in human fashion, can forgive another who has done him private wrong. But it would be waste of time thus wilfully to deceive ourselves as to the question at issue here. This is not the case of a man forgiving a personal wrong. Nor yet is it the daring instance of a man constituting himself the representative of the human race, and offering society's forgiveness to a broken profligate for the tangle of sorrow and suffering his sin had involved his fellows in. The Scribes and Pharisees knew better than that when they asked, 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' They recognized that this Jesus was claiming to offer the man God's forgiveness for the rankling wound His life of sin had made in the Divine Heart. It was something tremendous and unheard of that was spoken here.

But suppose we start from the assumption that Jesus was speaking simply as a man. Can we still hold this word of His for true? Is it ever the case that man—any son of the human race—has the authority to transmit God's forgiveness to men? 'Yes, there is a sense in which it is true.' Any man *who has been true to his humanity* may be used by God as a channel to convey a fragment at least of the Divine Forgiveness to men. But let us make no mistake as to what that means. 'True to his humanity'—that is the point. It is the man who has himself remained pure who can be the

medium of the Divine Forgiveness. Only he; and just in proportion to his pure-heartedness. Not the austere Puritan who has only put fetters on his passions: what does his hard heart know of forgiveness? But the tender heart whose passions have been transformed into a holy, selfless sympathy for men. This is that priesthood of innocence, ordained by a mystic unction, whose source is from above.

Have we not met such saintly spirits sometimes—once at least—in the course of our pilgrimage? And is it not the case that wherever we meet with genuine innocence in a human soul we are touched and thrilled with a sense of the unearthly? Do we not feel that its innocence is the very air and breath of Heaven? Do we not feel the clean and wholesome fragrance, blowing in through that open casement from off the fields of Paradise, and then coming forth with its burthen of healing to enter our dusty human lives? Which of us has not known some saintly soul in whose company we have felt ourselves lifted up for a time and made better men and women—cleansed of some of life's stains, healed of some of our brokenness, eased of some of our burdens? It was the gracious energy of God's forgiving Spirit, reaching forth a hand to touch us, all unknown to them.

¶ Professor Flint has said, speaking of Archbishop Leighton and of the stern conditions of Scotland in the midst of which he lived: 'As far as I can judge, a purer, humbler, holier spirit than that of Robert Leighton never tabernacled in Scottish clay. He was "like a star" which "dwelt apart" while the storm raged below, or like a fair flower of Paradise dropped amidst the thorn and thistle on some bleak mountain-side.'

¶ Recall J. K. Jerome's simple and reverent story, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. As we read the revolution that sickly young man with his unearthly innocence made in the dingy London boarding-house, with its shallow and selfish inmates, we are led, inevitably and designedly, to think of Christ.

To the casual observer, those people who lived at 48 Bloomsbury Square were a very commonplace and dilapidated company. Nobody looking in upon them as they gathered in the sitting-room after dinner would ever have thought of them as being beautiful either in life or looks. They didn't so think of themselves. The landlady was just like any other landlady of that neighbourhood—out to get as much as she could with no more work than was necessary. The middle-aged Colonel and his wife had tasted so much of the disillusionment of life, that now they didn't pretend to anything, either of chivalry or of charm. The painted lady, when she was not in the street, sat in a chair—the easiest if she could get it—and just amused herself according to fancy, apparently quite content. But the Stranger saw more. It was as if looking into their eyes he looked further and disclosed to them something of worth—an ideal self that they had forgotten.

Nor is this all. Like the Jesus he represents, he goes further. With a deft turn of a sentence, Jerome lets us know that this unusual visitor had eyes that, while gentle and childlike, could also command. If he was able to reveal something of worth beneath the commonplace and contemptible, he could also call it forth. That is what happened with the Colonel's daughter. The Stranger had spoken to her as if she were a noble-souled, high-minded young woman. Miss Devine, on the contrary, knew herself to be a slack, luxury-loving animal, quite willing to sell herself to the bidder who would offer her the finest clothes, the richest foods, the most sumptuous surroundings. But the transformation takes place.[1]

In our own experience, when we have looked into the open countenance, the untroubled eyes of one who neither suspects, nor conceals, nor shuns, nor is jealous, have we not felt the Christly presence? It is the same character as St Paul describes in his great rhapsody of love. It thinketh no evil—believes in the integrity of others. It rejoiceth in the Truth—persists in finding it everywhere, lurking behind human falsehood and sham. It hopeth all things—even of the most hopeless, and goes on hoping to the end.

But someone may say, 'Oh yes, it is very beautiful, no doubt, but innocence with an inveterate faith in the integrity of others usually ends in getting itself hoaxed and deceived. It's an ineffective, impracticable thing.' Yes, but it is not the innocence we are passing judgment on when we say that. It is the imperfection, the limitation of the soul in which we found it. Consider the perfection of Christ's innocence—innocence that looks with clear

[1] W. Foxon, in *The Methodist Times*.

searching gaze through all our imperfection—yet innocence with an unlimited, an inexorable, an irrepressible faith in our essential human worth. Does it not completely disarm us, conquer us, make us what it persists in believing us to be whenever we allow ourselves honestly and sincerely to stand in its sacred presence? That was how Christ cleansed men and redeemed them, when He took upon Him our humanity, and—before the Cross was thought on—walked the quiet lanes of Palestine in stainless purity combined with perfect humility and gentleness towards the sinful, waking within them the longing for goodness. When they felt the tenderness of His comforting hand stretched out to touch them, they felt that a rill had been opened through His soul out of the Unseen; and that the power and the life and the love that flowed towards them through it were the Power and the Life and the Love of God—gracious, healing, cleansing, strengthening. When He said to this poor, palsied creature, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' He said God is at this moment, through the holy passion of My heart, soliciting you to take His forgiveness.

It is Jesus Christ alone who has the right to speak that word to us, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' Why? Merely because of the holy innocence of His humanity? Nor for that reason alone; but because He pledged His word to God to maintain that innocence unsullied and perfect to the end; and because He kept His word! Think what that meant in a sinful world—that never by a moment's wavering or want of steadfastness, never by a single false turn or deviation from the way of the Divine Will, should He let that flood of Divine power and love, that flowed through the channel won by God through His soul, be lessened or checked or obstructed—why, it meant passion, pain, suffering, agony, sacrifice. This was the Divine necessity that Jesus felt when He said, 'The son of man *must* suffer many things.'

The Cross is our surety—it is for ever the world's surety—that Jesus kept His word to God. And we kneel at the Cross to say, 'Son of man, thou alone hast the right to say with absolute authority "thy sins be forgiven thee"; Thou art the Son of God—holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sinners, made perfect in thy filial obedience through suffering.'

'Such an High Priest became us.' And it is only when we have learned to abide in Him perpetually—to make Him our dwelling-house, and not merely our temple to which we only now and then resort—that His priestly innocence will complete its redeeming work in us.

The Call of Levi

Mark ii. 14.—'As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.'

With this bare chronicle does the Evangelist record one of the most interesting events in the Gospel: the call of a publican to become a personal follower and afterwards an apostle of Jesus. We know so little of some of the original Apostles that the modern estimate is inclined to dismiss them as unimportant persons about whom we know nothing because there is so little to tell. But this obscurity was of their own design; they desired nothing but to serve Christ in silence; not a word is written in the Gospels merely to illustrate their character or illuminate their career. But Matthew was one of the best educated of the disciples, and day by day he noted down the logia or sayings of the Master. Behind that collection of sayings the Apostle is willing to hide, though it is a bequest to posterity beyond all price. It is a remarkable fact that the publican-evangelist is the most patriotic of the New Testament writers, finding in Old Testament prophecy the explanation of the events in the life of Jesus and of much of His teaching.

Brief as this notice is it tells us almost enough to satisfy our curiosity. The outstanding fact is that Levi was a publican or tax-gatherer—that he belonged to a class that was socially dead. To appreciate what this meant we must recollect what position the tax-gatherer had in Palestinian society and how his calling was regarded in all respectable Jewish circles. Every one knows enough of Gospel conditions to be acquainted with the facts about a publican's appointment and business in the time of our Lord. Appointed as tax-gatherer or customs officer by the Roman Government, he undertook his unwelcome task not as a paid civil servant, or even as a commissioner, but often as the result of an auction at which he made the highest bid for the post, and then had to recoup himself by charging whatever he could extort.

To undertake such a post meant that a man had renounced his patriotism sufficiently to hire himself to the hated conqueror, and was willing to practise a calling which was in every one's eyes nothing better than aiding oppression and living on robbery. It seems that for a long time no Jew could be found to undertake such an unpatriotic and dishonest business, but by the time of our Lord, at least in Galilee, Jews had been tempted to undertake the position probably by the money that was to be made out of it. A generation before this the publicans were mostly foreigners—slaves and freed men—directly employed by the Imperial government of Rome, but at this date taxes were collected by subordinate rulers like the Tetrarch Philip and Herod Antipas, who were responsible to the Imperial power. This may help to explain why it is that we find so many Jews acting as tax-gatherers in the time of our Lord. Anyhow they were an organized wealthy, but entirely ostracized, class.

In the Gospels of St Mark and St Luke Matthew is called Levi, the son of Alphæus—no doubt the name chosen by his parents. May it not be reasonably inferred that he was destined for the Church and that his parents hoped to see him one day among the Rabbis? But we may imagine that the formalism of the priests, the selfishness and worldliness of the Scribes and Pharisees created a feeling of antipathy in Levi's mind, and gradually alienated him from the religious traditions of his fathers.

We do not know what induced him to become a tax-gatherer—whether it was that he had lost faith in the religion of his nation or whether it was altogether the desire to accumulate wealth. What we do know is that Levi gathered in his shekels in his toll-house in Capernaum, and was on his way to become a rich man, but his money brought him neither happiness nor contentment. And now a New Teacher had appeared in Capernaum. All Galilee rang with the fame of the Prophet from Nazareth, and wherever He went there was great curiosity to see and hear Him. The excitement spread even to those who were shut out of the meetings of the synagogue. 'The publicans and sinners gathered themselves together for to hear him.' And among the publicans who heard Jesus preach His first sermon in Capernaum was Levi. It was curiosity that brought him to hear the sermon, but the sermon he heard proved to be the turning-point in his life. He had never heard preaching like this before. For as he stood and listened, it seemed as if the Preacher were preaching directly to him. Those clear eyes searched him through and through, and the words He spoke probed his very soul. 'No man,' said the Preacher, looking Levi full in the face, 'no man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' And again, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' And again this, 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.' Levi went back to his toll-booth, but he could not forget the Preacher and those searching words.

He went back to his office to count his shekels, but their spell over him was gone. Levi was not satisfied with *himself*. He could not shake off the lingering sense of disloyalty he felt towards the ancient genius and spirit of his people. Nor could he overlook that body of his fellow-countrymen about him, who, although they were deeply dissatisfied with Zion as she was, nevertheless continued working and waiting within the old traditions for the reviving visitation of Israel's God. Nor could he amputate the memory of his childhood's religion, the pious tuitions of his father and mother, the holy customs of their devout and sunny hearth. He had, indeed, become party enough to the ways of the new paganism, but he could not become a pagan quite. Certainly he was making money; but he felt he was paying for it with the treasury of his soul. An unhappy man!

Such was the state of Levi's mind and heart when the New Teacher stopped opposite his booth and addressing him personally said, 'Follow me.' It was the call Levi longed to hear and he gave it instant obedience.

So Levi left his golden gains,
At the great Master's call;
His soul the love of Christ constrains
Freely to give up all.

The tide of life was at its flow,
Rose higher day by day;
But he a higher life would know
Than that which round him lay.

Nor Fortune, bright with fav'ring smile,
Can tempt him with her store ;
Too long she did his heart beguile,
He will be hers no more.

To one sweet voice his soul doth list,
And, at its ' Follow Me,'
Apostle, and Evangelist
Henceforth for Christ is he.[1]

Thus it came to pass that Jesus had a publican as one of the chosen Twelve. The glorious unconventionality of the Lord Jesus Christ is never more seen than in this. If we realize what the position of a publican was in the time of our Lord, we must be amazed at the audacity and courage of an action like this. It was enough to damn the movement from the beginning that he chose that disreputable man as one of His apostles. As a matter of fact there was nothing that did bring more criticism on our Lord than the fact that He continually cared for publicans and was found so often in their company. He cared nothing about the antecedents of Levi, and what his circumstances were. He saw in that man one who might be an apostle and do apostolic work ; and in spite of all the criticism of the good people of His time He said to that man, ' Follow me ! ' and he followed Him.

The first service that Levi the publican did for Jesus his Redeemer was to make Him a great feast. And of all the feasts that ever Jesus attended there could have been none so completely to His heart as the one Levi made for Him that day. For the feast was the offering of a grateful soul, and the company was of the kind that Jesus loved to meet. This feast was Levi's testimony to his *thankfulness* and gladness of heart.

¶ One of the stories related in Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of King Edward VII.* is that of Arthur Lynch, who sided with the Boers in the South African War and fought against Britain. When the war was over he had to take his place in the high courts on the solemn charge of treason. A great many people urged that King Edward should exercise his clemency, but King Edward viewed the matter very gravely, and so did the Home Secretary. After many appeals and considerable delays, the past was forgiven and forgotten, and Lynch was set free. How did he show his gratitude ? When the Great War burst upon the world Arthur Lynch joined the British Army, and before the War was over he had attained the rank of colonel. The former enemy became a staunch friend and fighter.[1]

Let my full heart what it can bestow ;
Like Mary's gift [or Levi's feast] let my devotion prove,
Forgiven greatly, how I greatly love.

And—what must have moved him more than anything else—it would be an act of *confession* before the world. It would be a testimony for God to the very class among whom his past life had been lived : like a soldier confessing Christ in the mess-room ; a workman in the factory ; a merchant in the office ; a sailor in the ship. It was a grand act of renunciation done before the world, perhaps as well in self-defence as in joyful confession.

¶ It recalls the striking chapter in Luther's life similar to it ; when the student of law at Erfurt, awakened by the lightning flash in the Thuringian Forest, resolved to give up his brilliant prospects in the legal profession and enter the Augustinian Convent there.

He said nothing to his fellows. He knew they would only try to dissuade him. But, like Levi, he made a great feast. He invited all his old boon companions to a last jovial gathering. At the head of the table he sat as merry as any there. The jesting and merriment went on as before, for though Luther was as true a Christian as ever was, he saw no harm in merriment or laughter in themselves ; but at length, when the hour got late and the feast was almost over, he arose and in a serious voice that hushed the voice of laughter, said : ' Friends, I want to tell you one thing before you go. This is the last night you and I shall meet as boon companions. To-night, this very hour, I enter the Convent. To-morrow I shall be a monk.' [2]

Discipleship

Mark ii. 14.—' Follow me.'

THE call of Christ is simply ' Follow me.' And to whom did He say it ? To men who were

[1] J. S. B. Monsell.

[1] T. W. Riddle.

[2] W. Mackintosh Mackay, *The Men Whom Jesus Made*, 140.

busy making their living; to men who had exactly the same sort of reasons for heeding Him which we may have to-day. In a very real sense the Christian Church was born when the Great Leader called the first men to go with Him. Personal loyalty was all that He asked from them. What it was going to mean they did not in the least know.

The claim of Jesus to the leadership of life receives all too scant attention. Army chaplains report that 'the average soldier thinks that Jesus was very good and perfectly just, but a trifle soft.' But how did the average soldier come by that thought? The Church must have given it to him. We must have presented Christ as a victim and not as a hero. We must have made much of His meekness and overlooked His majesty and the tremendous spiritual authority which fitted the Servant of the Lord to be the Leader of men.

For Jesus is the miracle of human history. Out of the narrowest race came this universal Man. As music makes universal appeal to the ear, and heroism universal appeal to the heart, so Jesus makes universal appeal to mankind. He is not limited with local colour, and is not beset with racial marks. For He is like the winds on the heath that blow for all; He is too great for an age; He belongs to humanity. His challenge is for all who hear, and His gifts for all who respond. As in the days of His flesh He went round Galilee challenging their courage, and claiming their discipleship, His call still rings with its challenge and its claim. But what does His challenge mean and what does His call involve? We must know what it is we believe, and what is the nature of our discipleship.

1. The first thing is the acceptance of the will of Jesus as the supreme authority for life.

The world is suffering to-day from ill-will and self-will. There is a rebellion against authority. Even Mr Bernard Shaw tells the world that 'The only golden rule is that there is none. Do as you like.' Mr Shaw is, of course, aiming at the great truth that authority has ceased to be a mere external rule, and has become an internal principle; that you must look less to the community for guidance and more to your own conscience. But it is a perilous thing to tell people already destroying themselves with perversity and foolishness to do as they like. It is that spirit that creates anarchy and strife. As a matter of fact at the heart of all true liberty there is great restraint. To do as you like is mere licence, but to do as you ought is true liberty. For liberty is setting a man free to be and to do as he ought. There is the tree thrusting up its trunk and out its branches. It is at liberty to grow and thrive, because it is restrained by its roots from falling to the earth. When we were children and were denied liberties that might be harmful to us, we made up our minds that when we were grown up we would break every law and only do as we liked. But when we have grown up we think with wistfulness of our childish thoughts. We know now that our larger liberties grow out of our smaller restraints; and now that we can do the foolish actions we are restrained by wiser thoughts. As P. T. Forsyth put it, 'A man's first business is not to find freedom but a master.'

¶ Dr John Kelman, who has travelled widely in the Near East, tells of a curious experience of a friend and himself in crossing the Arabian desert on horse-back. Wishing to visit the ruin of a temple half-a-mile off the track they fastened the horses' bridles to some scrub and set out on foot. His friend's horse soon pulled up the frail support and galloped across the desert. They watched him as he stopped upon a sand dune. He first looked out across the open desert. There was freedom if he went in that direction, but it was freedom coupled with death, for he could live but a short time without water. Then he looked back. Here was obedience, but obedience coupled with life, for water and food and protection were to be found here. He looked in either direction and then came down the slope of the dune and rejoined his companion.

Thus we come to the teaching of Jesus. He who acted like the servant yet claimed to be the Master. It was after He had washed the disciples' feet that He declared unto them: 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am.' It was after shifting the centre of gravity for the moral realm and bewildering the world with new beatitudes that He said that the wise man building upon rock was the man who did the things He told them. This was the thing He asked of His disciples, that they would make His will theirs, as He had

made the Father's will His own. Here then is a standard for the Church and for the individual: The will of Christ. A man is not left at the mercy of his own subjective emotions and changing feelings. The will of Jesus is an objective reality, and may become a subjective guide and law. We are in perfect liberty because we are in harmony with perfect law. For the Law of Christ is only the mental expression of the Love of Christ. So, even while He claimed to be their Master and Lord, He was in reality setting them free. As He said: 'If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.'

And here also is the great hope of the world. With His coming into the world there was a promise of peace among men of good-will. After His life and ministry were over the world knew that good-will meant His will. Being a Christian means honestly trying to do the will of Jesus. It is no easy task, but it is the task that brings the richest fruit and the greatest satisfaction. If the world would accept the will of Jesus as the standard for its life and conduct, the problems would all be solved that seem now so completely insoluble. The world has tried Barabbas, and given to him armies and navies and power and riches, but he has done little to help and much to hurt; but the other, 'The Man Christ Jesus,' still waits His time. Some day by sheer inability to deal with the disasters self-will and ill-will have brought, masters and men, prince and peasant, will turn to the Prince of Peace.

2. The second thing in discipleship is the recognition of the character of Jesus as the supreme ideal for life.

There is a tendency in many directions either to misunderstand or to exploit some of the teachings of modern psychology. In one direction in particular many are being led astray. They say they are going to claim the right that psychology declares is theirs: the right of self-expression. If they mean that every life has a right to its own individuality and to grow according to the law of personal growth, they are right. But the peril of the people who urge their right to self-expression is that they mean they have a right to do and be as they like. In that case there is an end to the majesty and meaning of the moral world. The liar expresses his truth-hating self; the sensualist expresses his earthly self; the miser expresses his grasping self; the burglar expresses his acquisitive self. If they have the right to such self-expression, why does the exercise of such right always destroy the person concerned? One is more concerned about the self to be expressed than about the right of an individual to express it. For character is the supreme thing in life. What a man is is of more importance than what a man does. Character gives value to service. We look at the gifts in a man's hands, but Jesus looks at the thoughts in a man's heart. How often fine service is marred by the mud of mean motives. It is so important that a man should be good. The better he is the better for other people. That is what Burne-Jones meant when he said: 'There is only one gospel to-day; make the best of yourself for the sake of other people.' For one's character represents one's lifting power. No drunkard can help to sobriety; no liar can lead to the truth; no sensualist can purify the life.

¶ Owen Wister tells us in his famous novel that 'A middlin' doctor's a pore thing, and a middlin' lawyer's a pore thing, but God save me from a middlin' man o' God.'

Here it is that we find the call of Jesus. He is what we ought to be. He is what God is. To be like Him is life's highest aim and hardest task. And in these days we need the idealism of His character to save us from the realism of our own. The novelists and playwrights of to-day are eager to show us life as it is. We are not afraid of facts, but if we are to see the facts of life, then let us see the facts of the two sides of life. How prone we are to mark the dark and dull days of the calendar and to permit the bright days to slip by unnoticed in delight. But if they have a right to show life as it is, much more have we the right to show life as it ought to be. Realism is simply the fact of life, but idealism is the truth of life. One is the utter muddle man has made of his life, and the other the shining purpose God holds for it yet. And here Jesus is supreme. When He comes we become very conscious of the shabbiness of our lives. He calls men to learn of Him; He urges men to follow Him; to love as He loved and to live as He lived. He represents at once fact and truth, sanity and spirituality. To become like Him is the aim of the Christian life, and is the very essence of Christian discipleship.

3. Discipleship does not simply mean an acceptance of an authority and an ideal, but a discovery of power equal to Christ's purpose.

In Jesus we find the qualities of sanity and spirituality perfectly blended. And we are therefore sure that He will not call men to an impossible task, or challenge them to follow an unattainable ideal. So He supplies the disciple with light for the path and strength for the task. And this is the discovery that every faithful disciple makes.

There are many people in our churches to whom Christian service has become a monotony. Their work is a duty but never a delight. Their very religion has become a burden to bear instead of a power to help. They have found the vision of duty, but not the secret of the resources. They have heard the call to the best, but never received the power equal to its true answer. It is here that the discovery of the disciple becomes a witness to the weary Church worker as well as the outsider. He can bear witness to a great truth, which becomes the possession of every faithful follower: That in the Presence of the Master the disciple also can attain. For he holds fellowship in a closer and deeper sense than that which Byron gave to Tennyson, or Turner held out to Ruskin. One such disciple cried out with joy: 'The glory of Jesus lies here—that He makes possible to the ordinary man what otherwise is only possible to the hero.' And what James Smetham discovered is the open secret of the Christian religion. The high mental beliefs of Christianity are easily held in the mind when one holds Him in the heart. So Glover writes of the big facts of Christian faith and experience, 'It is easy to believe these high and great things in His presence.' The fine moral victories of the saint life are within our reason when we are ourselves within His reach.

¶ In *John Inglesant* we are told of one who was gravely tempted of the flesh, and how the memory of his earlier Christian profession helped him to victory; and the author adds: 'For it is not easy to ruin him in whose palm the pressure of Christ's touch still lingers.'

It is a high task to which we are called. Huxley once said: 'It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him.' It does. To stand up to life with His courage, to master ourselves, to make His purpose ours, and to face our fellows with His love—there is our task. But we are also called to high and great resources; all that He is and all that He holds, He is and holds for us.

'Who calleth?' Thy Master calleth;
Sit, Disciple, and learn of Him.
'Who calleth?' Thy Monarch calleth;
Rise, O subject, and follow Him.
He is stronger than death or devil;
Fear not thou if the foe be grim.
'Who calleth?' Thy Lord God calleth;
Fall, O creature, adoring Him:
He who loves thee as no man loveth
Bids thee give up thy heart to Him.

Scribes and Pharisees

Mark ii. 16, 17.—'When the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

The Scribes and the Pharisees do not represent different parties in Hebrew society. The same man might be and indeed often was both. But viewed as a Scribe he was a man of rules and documents and religious principle; regarded as a Pharisee he was not that alone, but also religiously a strict separatist and politically a keen and ardent nationalist. We ask, then, Are men who guide their lives by rules or think most of their own race, its history and distinctive testimony, to be despised? Are we not doing these men an injustice? Most certainly in their own judgment and in that of their contemporaries, they were reckoned not simply good men, but 'the best' men in the nation—the most respectable, the most highly educated and the most religious.

How, then, do they come to show so badly in the Gospels? Why were they the only people to make Jesus quite genuinely angry; He who was so full of love for everything human, who was so tender with the faults, and even with the grievous sins, of our poor humanity? The answer to these queries may be very briefly given; and it is worth giving, as the Scribe and Pharisee are still alive and active in the world.

The reason why these good, well-educated, influential men show so badly in the story is simply that with all their advantages of culture,

influence, position, and with their many good points, they were deficient in broad human sympathies. And from that defect certain things followed. One of these things was mental obtuseness. They could not see things, things plain enough to some other men and to a good many women who had not half their learning.

There are one or two phrases in the Gospels which to any student of history and observer of human life have far more than a merely local reference; such as: 'The common people heard him gladly,' or 'With what difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven,' or, to take one example from the Apostles, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' What is the meaning of that? Does it mean that education is a mistake, a handicap, and not a help in things of the soul, in work that demands above everything enthusiasm, insight and love? Remembering Paul's record, we could scarcely say that, for by the consecration of his learning and his mental gifts he did a work which no unlettered man could have done. Or are we to suppose that to be 'well-born,' and to have command of the resources that belong to that, limits one's humanity and usefulness and power to render great service to one's kind? Surely there are too many examples to the contrary to admit of one's drawing so absurd a conclusion. Other things being equal, these should all be helps and not hindrances to real power and usefulness.

What meaning, then, do we give to this fact, that in a supremely testing time—the hour of the Incarnation, when God, as it were, took the world unawares—that then—not for the first time in great crises and not for the last—humble and unlettered men, common men, came on the whole far better out of the test than the priests and the rulers, the cultured and the influential? What does it mean? Abraham Lincoln said that God must think well of common men or He would not have made so many of them. The Scribe and the Pharisee had not much use for common men. They had no true sense of what they and the world owed to them. They were there—these common men—to be directed and managed from above. The Scribe and Pharisee had a motto, 'The people that know not the law are accursed'; the law being to them not what we mean by civil law, and not the embodied righteousness and mercy loved of the prophets, but a highly artificial and exclusive thing elaborated by generations of Rabbis and only to be obeyed or even understood by a select caste of superior persons like themselves. Christ, of course, was 'up against' all that. He believed in common men, gave them His best, spoke to the deepest in them. 'Our Lord,' says William Denny, 'clearly intended all ability and superiority to become servants, not dominators of the weaker elements in human society.' He did not, indeed, speak much of the forms of human society. He was concerned chiefly with its spirit. A right spirit, a true ideal would, He knew, make in time its own appropriate forms. And the spirit of the Scribe and Pharisee—the scornful spirit, the exclusive and selfish spirit, and above all the consciousness of superiority—was to Christ anathema.

¶ Tennyson thus portrays this attitude:

O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.[1]

Education of the type represented by this caste was no help, but a positive hindrance to the understanding of any of the great human problems. No education is a help which neglects spiritual factors, which does not make a man more human, more tolerant, able to project himself by the power of sympathy into the standpoint of other men. And all education which breeds exclusiveness or scorn is worse than a failure; it is a calamity, a crime, the murder of a soul.

¶ I am told that Goethe defines genius as 'being a right appreciation of the situation,' *i.e.*, I judge, a perfect sympathy. Here is the detector. Any touch of 'Stand off, I am holier, wiser, more refined, more respectable than thou,' is like a green precipitate which shows false culture somewhere: and it abounds.[2]

All that hath been majestical
In life or death since time began
Is native in the simple heart of all.[3]

Big things, the things that matter, are the exclusive property of no man and no class of

[1] *The Palace of Art.*
[2] *Letters of James Smetham.* [3] Lowell.

men. The reverence and humility that are an inseparable part of real greatness, belief that the Divine Spirit speaks through the common heart, and that the most and the greatest any man can do is to take obstacles out of the way, help it to find true and worthy expression in ideals and aims and achievements that will bind men in unity and marshal them as brothers moving together on the path to the goal whither it is in the purpose of God to lead them. That is the hopeful way, the only worthy way, to the end of time. Not to look down from a height as a superman, but to recognize that the great things, the only abiding things, are the human things that lie deep in the common heart because God has put them there.

The modern Scribe or Pharisee may curl his lip in scorn at that, but it is the truth all the same: the wisdom of Christ, the foolishness of God which is wiser than men. That, in the deep heart of it, is the difference between the Scribe and Pharisee of all time and Christ. Its special manifestation indicated in this passage, and still operative more or less consciously wherever you have the Scribe and Pharisee spirit, was the separation, by these men, from their own narrow standpoint, of mankind into two well-defined divisions, saint and sinner. Christ would have none of that, and no more can we, if we have learned of Him. There is no such classification possible to man. There is an actual sinner in every saint and a possible saint in every sinner. Our own hearts teach us that, unless we are altogether blinded by silly pride and egotism. It is quite in the spirit of Christ that many of our own great novelists, poets and humanists, have taught us to see gleams of nobility and beauty in unlikely places. Behind rough exteriors and even coarse language there may often lie pure gold of heroism and unselfishness.

¶ A characteristic story of two British soldiers during the War is told by an observer who was taking a walk on a somewhat dismal French road. The usual mud abounded, and a rain was descending which would have done credit to the Hebrides. At the side of the road a military waggon was drawn up, and upon it two men seemed to be engaged in violent altercation. A nearer inspection proved that one of them had lost his overcoat and was, apparently, shivering and unwell. His friend was searching the outlying regions of a soldier's vocabulary—regions more vivid than refined—to describe the folly the other had displayed in mislaying so useful a garment on such a day; and ended his tirade by saying, ''Ere—put my coat on.' With the hands of compulsion he forced his companion to take the covering, and himself proceeded to get wet, the while he chanted his desire that some one should take him home to dear old Blighty. The ritual of the act, so to speak, was scarcely evangelical; but the act itself was the gold of Christian charity. It was another case for reflections upon Gunga Dhin![1]

No! the world is not divided as the Scribes and Pharisees divide it. And what hope have any of us but this—which should give us pitying hearts for all that wear a human face—that they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick, and that Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

If only we could feel that, how it would kill all sense of superiority in us, give us human hearts, and draw us and all men nearer to each other and to God. How much more easily the new world would be built and all our problems solved, if we could but look out on life in that spirit!

The New Wine

Mark ii. 22.—'And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins: else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins' (R.V.).

This is a very homely comparison, the point of which has been made clearer for us by the Revised Version's substitution of the word 'skins' for the word 'bottles.' The bottles of the East were, and for the matter of that still are, for the most part made of skins, and chiefly goatskins. But skins get worn by constant attrition and become thin by age. And what our Lord is saying here is this, that when skins have become thus worn and thin they cannot stand the strain put upon them if new wine is poured into them. For the process of fermentation generates certain gases, which in turn exercise pressure upon any vessel containing them. An old and worn wine-skin could not resist this pressure, and the result

[1] N. Maclean and J. R. P. Sclater, *God and the Soldier*, 141.

of pouring fermenting wine into an old skin would be that the skin would probably burst, and the wine, consequently, be lost. New wine, if it was to be kept safe, had to be put into new skins—skins with ' give ' and elasticity, as well as strength in them.

1. Now these words of Christ proclaim as a law the expansiveness of the life He bestows upon men. They betoken a new force of life full of latent disruptive powers which comes to those who unite themselves with Him. The life which is the product of such union is not expressed in the imposition of a new precept, but in the interposition of a new principle, a new passion, a new power. Thus, in the nature of the case, it demands for itself new modes and terms of expression. An illustration of this necessity is to be seen in the comparison of Christianity as Christ taught it with the Judaism which it both fulfilled and for ever dispensed with. Had the design of a large section of the early Church been successful, and had Christianity been restricted in its expression to Judaistic forms and terms, its inherent life would have been destroyed. It was as new wine which needed new bottles, for its very nature was to expand even to universal limits.

Thus also it is in individual life, for the love that is begotten of love is a fermenting force. Its actions cannot be governed by precedent, and its independence must at all costs be maintained. Indeed only so can its integrity be assured. The believer must be guided by his heart rather than by his head, by his instincts rather than by his theology, by constraint rather than by convention. The man who has learned to love Christ because of His great love, must express his grateful devotion in the fullest possible manner. Such an one will obey and suffer and labour to the uttermost, not because of any external imperative, but because of love's internal constraint. It is in the nature of the case that such new wine as is the life and love of Christ cannot be contained in or take the shape of old bottles.

¶ Commissioner Tucker of the Salvation Army was once a highly-placed civil servant in India. But the love of Christ got possession of his heart, and at once he was filled with a desire to preach to India's millions. He surrendered position and the prospect of rank and fame, and gave up his life to save the lost of India —the new wine sought and found the new wine-skin.

2. The same truth applies, too, in the corporate life of the Church. New conceptions of Christ, of His demands, and of His claims, have always produced and will continue so to call into being new institutions. Old customs cannot restrict new life without serious danger to both. It is on this account that revivals very often mean revolts against an established order which, while it sufficed for a time to hold the wine which has long since lost its expansive strength, is now powerless to contain or control the force of new fullness of life. At Pentecost the new wine demanded new vessels, and a new Church order was born. Likewise the Church of to-day must adjust her outer life to her inner impulse, or she cannot long continue to receive such impulse, or to hold her place in the world. Conservatism may and often does mean constriction; and while not undervaluing that which has acquired worth by reason of long service, and to which attaches a value of antiquity which anything modern cannot possibly have, it must not be forgotten that there is an imperiousness in the Divine life which cannot suffer the bondage of the old order. And Christ is in these words warning the individual and the Church alike against the possible double loss of both wine and vessels. For no tragedy is greater than that of lost enthusiasms, because they are seldom recoverable; just as new wine when spilled is seldom, if ever, gathered again.

¶ The work of Francis and his brothers in Italy was a case of the ' new wine ' of religious life. Francis and his followers were clean outside the regular activities of the Roman Church. Francis himself was a layman, he and his comrades were not ' in orders.' But the love of Christ was in their souls, and so they went from place to place, like the apostles of old, preaching the good news of the Kingdom. It was not at all orderly or regular—the new life that was in them scoffed at all stereotyped methods, and adopted new methods of its own. Had Francis's work been allowed to go on its way untrammelled, unfettered, the history of religion might have been different. But Rome laid its hand on the order, regularized it and stereotyped it, and robbed it of its life and power. It poured the new wine into the old

bottles. The bottles did not burst, but the wine lost all its life and flavour. Rome, in a word, killed the Franciscan revival by forcing it to follow conventional forms and methods.

3. The right understanding of this principle will have an eminently practical manifestation also in our attitude toward others. If, for instance, we understand aright the law which Jesus here enunciated, we shall be slow to utter harsh condemnation upon what appears to be extravagance in the language or actions of those who have but recently come to know and love Him. How often do older Christians visit their indignation upon ardent young souls who are themselves just becoming enraptured with the love which has redeemed them, and so put a stumbling-block in their way. Many an earnest life has been lost to the cause of Christ and His Kingdom because some preacher or teacher has failed to see that new wine must be put into new bottles.

The same applies also to our judgment of one another in regard to our expression of apprehended truth. We are prone to condemn those who do not find themselves able to pronounce our shibboleths, who do not express their faith in terms which harmonize with our own, who do not subscribe to the same formulæ, but who, nevertheless, worship the same Lord, live by the same grace, and are seeking the same ends. To learn to regard such ones as being partakers of new wine will beget in us an appreciation of them and a loving toleration of those unessential things in which we find ourselves disagreeing, which will go far to proclaim to a beholding world the love which is our common bond.

Sunday

Mark ii. 27.—'The Sabbath was made for man.'

Jesus tested the institutions of His age by this standard. Their value was to be judged in service for man. The Sabbath was 'made for man,' not by man but by God, and it is the expression of a deep-seated, Divinely-implanted instinct which is inseparable from man's being. It does not rest merely on legal enactments but on needs and sanctions which are rooted in the human heart and conscience. Just as murder is not wrong because it is forbidden by the moral law, but it is forbidden by the moral law because it is wrong, so the weekly day of rest, whether Jewish Sabbath or Christian Sunday, is not right and good for man because it is commanded, but it is commanded because it is right and good.

Some, indeed, who have attempted to trace back this rest-day tell us that it has its beginnings in the institution of the Sabbath in the wilderness. But this cannot be true, for we find the existence of such a day in the records of nations which lived long before the Jews became a people. If it had begun in the Decalogue and was first promulgated by Moses it would, doubtless, have long ago ceased to be, but because it is a God-made instinct it belongs to all ages, and asserts its claim and need on us to-day as strongly as in those far-off days.

¶ Through the digging up, within recent years, of some of the clay tablets which were once part of the Royal Library at Nineveh, the capital of the ancient Babylonian Empire, it has been proved that thousands of years before Israel existed as a separate nation there were other much more highly cultured nations which observed the Sabbath as a religious custom. What religion, whether the Jewish or Christian, has done is not to create the day but to adopt, emphasize, protect, enforce its right observance.

1. Both Christ and the Pharisees agreed as to the sanctity of the Sabbath, but differed as to its observance. And not the least daring of the acts of our Lord was the manner in which He challenged the long-established traditions of their race. To Him the Sabbath was to be kept not merely in the letter but in the spirit—by the doing of holy deeds and the thinking of holy thoughts. Whereas the aspiration of the pious Jew was to conform in all respects to the law. It was, perhaps, almost inevitable under such circumstances that men should study the law with a minute attention to detail which was fatal to the apprehension of the great principles of right which it embodied. It was not that the Scribes and Pharisees were wilfully disloyal to the great principles of the law, but that their method of looking to its details rendered them incapable of seeing its general effect. Since they regarded the law as all given by God, they did not, for the most part, perceive the relative importance of the various commandments, nor

did they endeavour to trace out the principles underlying them. Their great object was to ensure that no commandment should be passed over. Thus it may be said of the majority of religious Jews of the time of Christ that their object was not to mould their lives according to some few great principles, but to keep 613 distinct commandments.

It was, however, no easy matter even for the zealous upholder of the law to determine exactly what its commandments were. When the Fourth Commandment is regarded not as a general principle but as a binding law prohibiting all manner of work, it follows that some definition of work is necessary. So we have the question, What is work? discussed with the utmost earnestness and with extraordinary care for details which appear to us of no importance. If we bear these things in mind, we shall the better understand the genuine amazement with which the Pharisees watched the disciples of Jesus, unrebuked by their Master, plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and rubbing out the grain in their hands. Such an act was well within the Rabbinical definition of work, and that Jesus, whom the disciples addressed as Rabbi, should be ignorant of it, or, if He knew it, should set it aside, was in their eyes a grievous scandal.

¶ Dr Driver gives a realistic picture of the Rabbinical method in the following. The prohibition to tie or untie a knot was too general, so it became necessary to define the species of knot referred to. It was accordingly laid down that a camel-driver's knot or a boatman's knot rendered the man who tied or untied them guilty, but Rabbi Weir said, 'A knot which a man can untie with one hand only, he does not become guilty of untying,' and Rabbi Jehudah then plunged the whole subject into a delightful and characteristic obscurity by laying down the rule that 'any knot might be lawfully tied that was not intended to be permanent.'

It was legalism and traditionalism which robbed the Sabbath of its beneficent character and was bound to come into collision with the teaching of Christ. Christ stood for a very different order of religious life than that. He stood for personal religion—the power of the soul to say 'My Father.' But whether the modern Sunday with all its pleasure is more in accord with the mind of Christ is seriously open to question. The main trouble is that there seems to be no consensus of opinion, no general agreement as to the correct observance of the day.

2. The whole subject will be greatly clarified if at the outset we realize clearly the fact that the Christian Sunday is not the Jewish Sabbath. The two days are historically quite distinct. The purpose of the Sabbath was to commemorate God's creative power; that of Sunday to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. Physical rest was the sole legal requirement of the Sabbath; whereas the chief obligation of Sunday is worship.

Instead of specific regulations let us see what underlying principles we have to guide us.

(1) The first principle is that of *worship*. This is first in importance and in time. The first day of the week was a working day when Christians first observed it by coming out in the early morning to worship in commemoration of their Lord's resurrection, then going to their daily tasks. Not for three centuries was it legally set aside as a day of cessation from toil. So the lesson for Christians is clear. However else the day may be used, unless worship finds a place Sunday is not properly kept. If Christians will for a time forget the things they have been taught not to do, and see that they at least do the one thing for which the day was inaugurated, namely, worship, we shall soon get both a saner and more spiritual viewpoint. Whatever else is done or not done, the Christian Sunday is not properly observed unless part of the day is given to the worship of God. Here lies the true sanctity and value of the day.

¶ Voltaire once stated: 'There is no hope of destroying the Christian religion so long as the Christian Sabbath is acknowledged and kept by men as a sacred day.'

(2) The second guiding principle is that of *rest*. The Sabbath was made for man. Man needs rest and never more than now. We are living at such a pace, competition is so strong, excitements follow one another so rapidly that men fear they cannot give up so much as one day a week. What a blunder it is, to put it on the lowest ground, namely, man's need of physical and mental rest. It is not only a Bible ordinance, but an immutable law written in our members. Everything in Nature, whether it be a car-wheel or the human brain, demands certain periods of rest, and man cannot afford

to ignore this law. Difficult as it may seem, it pays in the long run to devote one day in seven to rest.

¶ Very weighty are the words of John Burns on this question: 'Sunday rest is physically good, mentally invigorating and morally healthful. It has been commercially beneficial to the people of this land. It has done more than anything else to buttress and maintain the excellent institution we call "home." The day of rest is, from every point of view, a national treasure.'

¶ Sir Isaac Holden, the M.P., who died at a great age and full of honour, used to say that but for the weekly rest and break in his labours he must have gone mad at the time when in his spare hours he was perfecting his intricate and complicated invention and his brain was fearfully overtaxed.

But rest does not necessarily mean idleness. The whole man must have the opportunity of sharing in the benefits of the day or it fails in its object. The body of man finds in it the rest it needs, not, indeed, by doing nothing but in change of occupation. The mind of man rests not by lying fallow and thinking of nothing, but by diverting its energies into new channels. The heart of man renews its strength not by ceasing to love, but in change of surroundings, in the quiet of home life and home affections and interests. The spirit of man puts forth new powers as, raised heavenward, it contemplates the unseen, and looks up to God instead of being engrossed in the earthy.

¶ There was a time when it delighted me to flash my satire on the English Sunday. Now I praise it as an inestimable boon and dread every encroachment upon its restful stillness. When out of England I have always missed this Sunday quietude, this difference from ordinary days, which seems to affect the very atmosphere. . . . If its ancient use perish from among us so much the worse for our country. No loss among the innumerable we are suffering will work so effectually for popular vulgarization.[1]

(3) The third great principle is a social one, that of *brotherly love*. In this, as in all other respects, man is his brother's keeper. 'I will eat no meat that causeth my brother to stumble,' said the great Apostle, and that principle is of universal application. As applied to Sunday it means that the Christian's use of the day is to be determined to a great extent by the effect upon his neighbours. Not all that is lawful to do is right for the Christian to do. Even if right in itself it becomes wrong if it is done at the unnecessary expense of others' time and thought, or at the cost of the health of the body or mind or spirit of others. Sunday cannot be a day well and wisely spent by a man if in what he does, or neglects to do, he thinks only of himself and is indifferent to what extent others are obliged to work in order that he may rest, or is careless whether recreation, in itself lawful and innocent, means toil to those who ought to have rest. It is the bounden duty of all thinking people to see to it that their lives speak with no uncertain sound, that there shall be no place for compromise or compliance with fashion, but that, cost what it may, as far as we ourselves are concerned, the Christian Sunday shall be used for the good of the whole man, and for the good of every man. Let us each so use the day that it will not end with mere refraining from harming others, but will seek to do some positive good, such as visiting the sick and lonely and in other ways making the day a real joy and blessing not only for ourselves but for others.

> The Book, the Church, the Day were given
> For men, not God—for earth not Heaven,
> Are blessed means to holiest ends,
> Not masters but benignant friends.[1]

[1] George Gissing.

The Withered Hand

Mark iii. 1.—'He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.'

1. Tradition says that this man was a bricklayer and quite probably it is true. He was quite an ordinary person, one of the crowd of undistinguished people who assembled that Sunday in the white marble synagogue at Capernaum. He is not even like Lazarus, or Bartimaeus, whose names have come ringing down the aisles of time. The only name his fellow-worshippers had for him was 'the man with the withered hand.' And that, from the first, is just the kind of man whom the gospel has been powerful to handle, and to give back to usefulness again. That is what makes it a universal gospel—that heavenly power over

[1] Whittier.

nameless people. If lack of culture made it ineffectual it could never be preached across the world. And the very fact that it *is* so preached, and preached with signs and wonders following, proclaims it as of the *Son of Man*.

Again we recognize him as a person who had had a hard and embittering experience. We feel the force of that more vividly when we turn to the Gospel of St Luke. One of the charming things about Luke's Gospel is his illuminative touches in the miracles. Luke was a doctor, with a doctor's eye, quick to observe everything pathological. He tells us that the leper was 'full of leprosy,' and that Peter's mother-in-law was down with 'a great fever'; here he reveals that the hand was the *right* hand. Nor had the man been so from birth. This cruel affliction had come upon him gradually. His hand grew stiff; he lost the power of it; gradually it shrank and atrophied. Until now, when people passed him in the street, they glanced at him with commiseration, and called him 'the man with the withered hand.' One thinks of everything that must have meant in a day when there were no insurances. His work gone—his children without bread—his wife a broken-hearted woman. It was a cruel thing, to all appearance meaningless. The years had brought him, when he was never dreaming of it, a hard and most embittering experience. Such people are always a great company. Nothing is so hard to bear in life as bitter things that seem devoid of meaning. And the beautiful thing is that it was just that kind of person whom our blessed Lord singled out that day, in a synagogue which would be crowded.

And then, equally evident is this, that this man had not lost his faith; for first of all the Saviour healed him, and faith is indispensable to miracle. Faith is not always *mentioned* in the miracles, nor is there any reason why it should be. Had one asked this man if he had faith, he might probably have answered in the negative, but Christ saw more in him than the man dreamed. Many people have more faith than they are ever willing to admit. Life is compact of faith; we could not live without it; we walk by faith through every common day—but it has never been turned upon the Lord. That is why Christ did not ask if he had faith. The man would probably have answered 'No.' But Christ knew him, and read his inmost heart, and saw there what the man had never seen.

And this man had not given up the Church: that also is a witness to his faith. After his hard and embittering experience he was in the synagogue on that Sabbath day. One can picture him in the old, happy days coming to church with his wife and children; for life was pleasant then, and God was good to him, and there was work, and bread upon his table. But now, impoverished—dependent upon others—with hungry children and a despairing wife—could we wonder if he had stayed away? 'The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want'—and his wife and children *were* in want. 'The Lord God, merciful and gracious'—had He been merciful and gracious unto him? Quite evidently this was a great big soul, still simply trusting in the God of Jacob.

¶ When Albrecht Dürer, the Nuremberg artist, was a youth, he was in competition with a young companion for a certain scholarship in art. Dürer won the prize, and his friend was exceedingly despondent at not being able to fulfil his ambition to be an artist. He folded his hands in resignation, not thinking what he was doing, but Dürer saw the significance of the action, and swiftly drawing the scene, handed the picture to his disconsolate friend, saying, 'I thought these hands of resignation so beautiful that they were worthy to be immortalized for ever.'

2. That withered hand hung helpless. How strange it is that a little part affects and governs the whole body! It may only be a finger or a nerve, but the entire organism suffers loss of peace and power. It speaks to us also of maimed faculties in the spiritual life. A man may be, on the whole, a fairly good Christian, but carry with him some withered virtue which cripples his usefulness, discounts his influence, and threatens his success.

It may be that one is not so diligent to-day as he was at the time of his first dedication. The declension may be the result, not of increasing years, but of business cares, absorbing pleasures and social interests. It is possible to destroy the art of service, just as to lose the ability to play or sing or paint. Disuse is a rapid destroyer of power. Stop working, and in an incredibly short time we do not want or feel able to serve. The inspiration to serve springs largely from the sphere of service. A Sunday-school teacher's interest in his class

arises from contact with his scholars ; but when connection ceases, it is marvellous how speedily the whole interest wanes. There are listless hands to-day that once were busy in the Master's vineyard, and the paralysis brings condemnation. It is the empty hand that withers. The service of the Christian is an accomplishment of high degree and grace, which long and constant practice brings to perfection. Every service develops into another, wider and more influential. The training of the hand is with Christ, the Healer of every infirmity, and the Developer of every faculty.

Think also of miserly hands. The open hand of a generous man is a beautiful sight, and the good that follows is countless. Do our hands ever subscribe to good causes ; are they generous towards God's treasury ; or do they always find a difficulty to give ? The possession of money is not a necessary qualification for generosity. A man though poor may have a liberal hand. And, moreover, the most generous hands of all were those of One who had not where to lay His head. The arteries that feed and give power to the hand are filled with blood from the heart, so that a withered condition means an interruption of the flowing stream. When the love of the heart is enlisted, the hand becomes a very obedient instrument. It has sometimes been remarked, ' what would the poor do without the poor '—a statement in which there is a world of meaning. The silent ministries of straitened men and women have formed many an entrancing chapter in charitable service and, not least so, the diligent searching out of needy cases. When Christ healed the withered hand of the worshipper in the synagogue, He taught all men that no hand ought ever to remain inactive in such a world of misery and need.

In beautiful contrast to our withered hands are those of the Saviour, warm with love, radiant with service. Scripture tells us much of those Divine hands, and what they accomplished. And it is significant that after the Resurrection Jesus showed the disciples His hands, and it was the sight of them that partly accounted for the conviction wrought upon the minds of the Emmaus companions at the evening meal. Not even death or driven nails can arrest the mission of living and loving hands. In some other and larger sphere there is work for them to do.

¶ On the morning of his arrest, Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Scottish Covenant, called for a basin of water, and having washed his hands, he said, ' They have need to be clean, for many this day shall see them.' In the evening they were fixed on the door of the prison at Netherbow, Edinburgh, and one bore testimony to their power in these remarkable words, ' These are the hands of a man who lived praying and preaching, and died praying and fighting.'

¶ In one of Tolstoy's books he represents an ideal Czar who keeps open house and table for all comers. But the guests had to face one condition—each man had to show his hands before sitting down to the feast. Those whose hands were rough and hard with honest toil were welcomed to the best of the board, but those whose hands were soft and white had only the crusts and crumbs. The hands were the index of the soul. The hard rough hands told the story of toil, sacrifice and suffering, and it was for these the best of the feast was spread.[1]

If we have grown slack in our Christian life we, too, can receive power from our Lord. The bricklayer, no doubt, had often tried to stretch his hand and tried in vain. But that Sabbath morning when the Lord commanded, somehow or other it was not in vain : the Lord said, ' Stretch it out,' and he just did it. He did not pray about it, or discuss it, or plead that it was utterly impossible. To his own intense amazement he just did it, though probably he could never tell *how* he did it. But we, who know the mind of Christ far more intimately than the despairing bricklayer, are cognizant of the secret of the Lord. There may be seeming ironies in life : there are none in the commands of Christ. When He enjoins, He enables. When He commands, He gives the power. Despondent, on the margins of despair, with an enfeebled will or withered heart, ' I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'

Praise God ! Praise God ! Give me my tools again !
Oh ! let me grasp a hammer and a saw !
Bring me a nail, and any piece of wood,
Come, see me shut my hand and open it,
And watch my nimble fingers twirl a ring.
How good are solids !—oak and stone and iron,
And rough and smooth, and straight and curved and round !

[1] J. G. Mantle, *God's To-morrow*, 38.

. . . Come, wife and see :
I am a man again, a man for work,
A man for earning bread and clothes and home ;
A man, and not a useless hold-the-hand ;
A man, no more a bandaged cumberer.
Oh, blessed Sabbath of all Sabbath days !
And did you hear them muttering at Him ?
And did you see them looking sour at me ?
They'll cast me from the synagogue, perchance ;
But let them : I've a hand, a hand, a hand !
And, ah, dear wife, to think He goes about
So quietly, and does such things as this,
Making poor half-men whole, in hand and foot,
In eye and ear and witless maniac mind,
To get such praise as that ! Well, here's a hand,
A strong, true hand that now is wholly His,
To work or fight for Him, or what He will ;
For He has been the Hand of God to me.[1]

The Anger of Jesus

Mark iii. 5.—' He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.'
Mark x. 14.—' When Jesus saw it, he was much displeased.'

One of the peculiarities of the Gospel of St Mark is its ascription to Jesus of the profoundest emotions. It is Mark alone who ascribes anger and indignation to Jesus. So far from this being derogatory to any revelation of the Divine nature it is precisely such a revelation of God as we need. The impassive, stoical deity who looked at human life unmoved, save by a sense of superiority, is a less worthy deity than the picture of the Old Testament Jehovah magnificent in anger. Both pictures belong to the twilight, and it must be remembered that Jesus revealed the Father to be different from both.

The Jesus of St Mark's Gospel is a human being who feels as we feel. Yet He is human in such a strange and peculiar way that He challenges our idea of humanity. He is moved to the depths by suffering where we stand callous before it. He is stirred with compassion at the sight of a crowd of people, whom some of us would dismiss as a mob. Before the records of His greatest anguish, when He was troubled in spirit at the visit of the Greeks, when He agonized in blood-like sweat in the garden, when He cried in despair upon the Cross, the simple fact is that we stand amazed, without any clue to understanding what He is suffering and why He is so distressed.

[1] A. R. Wells.

1. We must inquire what it was that moved Him.

He looked round on men with anger. Why ? Because of the hardness of their hearts. It was a question whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. The pious persons who were present had said no word, but His penetrating insight had discovered that they were waiting to see what He would do. Instead of being moved at the spectacle of suffering before them, they were occupied with a question which concerned a mere breach of religious decorum. Would Jesus heal in a synagogue on the Sabbath?

He was indignant with His disciples. Why ? Because they had presumed to judge that He did not want to be bothered with women and children. But Jesus was pained to anger that they should judge these mothers with their babes as unworthy of His notice, because the disciples counted them as persons who could not understand and who did not matter. It was a natural enough mistake. No great teacher in the world before had taken notice of women and children. And they were interrupting a highly important discussion between the Pharisees and Jesus.

But His most terrifying invectives were poured forth on the religious leaders of His day, because of their hypocrisy. Jesus' denunciations of the Pharisees startle the modern mind, and have called forth both apologies and objections. The situation does not seem to call for anything quite so unsparing. For hypocrites we are satisfied to express our contempt. Yet Jesus is merciless in His condemnation. There is no word of extenuation, no calling of them to justify themselves ; no discrimination of any kind.

It is amazing that such things should have moved Jesus so deeply. We should not have been surprised if He had been angry at the Roman occupation of Palestine, with its undoubted injustices and galling humiliations of a proud and liberty-loving people. Yet He never said a word about it. If He had denounced Herod for his vile life and Pilate for his cruel repression, He would only have followed in the wake of the prophets and John the Baptist. But He singles out divines and pious persons

and even His own disciples as the objects of His wrath.

Yet surely we can see why. He singled out the causes of things rather than their effects: *hardness of heart, thoughtless judgment, hypocrisy.* It was this deliberate postponement of the appeal of suffering to considerations of a theoretical character in which Jesus saw not only inability to feel things, but a determination not to. And we know this is the cause of half the evil in the world, the justifying of the suffering of others on some theory that it would disorganize things and break down established customs to interfere. It is not the social order itself, but the judgment of certain classes of persons as unworthy of consideration which produces injustice. Once women and children were recognized to be important it would completely revolutionize society. It is the condoning of certain injustices by the substitution of certain religious practices which is one of the chief sources of corruption in the world. If you allow religious men to profess one thing and practise another, you not only permit evil, you cloak and conceal it.

2. We must discover the nature of His emotion.

We have seen that when Jesus was about to heal anyone He was moved with a compassion so intense as to appear like anger. The very word which describes His tone of command to the leper is used by John to describe the vehemence of His grief at the tomb of Lazarus. When He looked round upon His audience, searching their very hearts, His eye lit with a flame that seemed like hostility, but was really grief at their hardened condition, the unresponsiveness of their conscience. If it was indignation with which He rebuked His disciples, it was one which could change immediately to a call of such tenderness that small children drew near in response and allowed themselves to be lifted on His knee and circled with His arms. The awful series of denunciations directed against the Pharisees closes with a heart-breaking appeal which helps us to understand the temper in which they were uttered. The emotion here describes a deep-seated feeling for which we have hardly any name. There was no anger in Jesus apart from grief and pity. It was compassion for men's blindness, grief for their sins, shame at their hardness of heart.

To be more deeply grieved and ashamed at sin than most of us are outraged and passionate at evil; that was the temper of Jesus. To associate resentment with compassion is for most of us exceedingly difficult. A careful study of history will show that most of the outbursts of human vengeance, however justifiable, have exceeded anything which could be called righteous retribution, and have signally failed to achieve their purpose. Think of Europe roused to anger by the preaching of Peter the Hermit, because of the insults done to pilgrims at the Holy Sepulchre. Yet there are few historians who do not regard the Crusades as one of the greatest stains on the annals of Christendom. When we read of the slaughter of the Saracens at the fall of Jerusalem, one sympathises with them rather than with the Crusaders, and we know that the Crusades gave Muhammadanism a life which otherwise it might never have had, with infinite harm to the lands where it reigns.

¶ Speaking with reference to the treaty of Frankfort, Gladstone said: 'The most fatal and in their sequel most gigantic errors of men are also frequently the most excusable and least gratuitous. They are committed when a strong impetus of right carries them up to a certain point, and a residue of that impetus, drawn from contact with human passion and infirmity, pushes them beyond it. They vault into the saddle; they fall on the other side.'

One great danger of resentment for us is that it opens the door to self-righteousness. Apart from good-will and humility, indignation and punishment work evil rather than good. We must recognize our kinship with the wrong-doer, otherwise ours will be a self-righteous goodness with no redemptive power in it.

¶ Mr Frank Swinnerton in one of his novels makes a weaker character say to a morally stronger, 'I can say things to you—anything I feel; and know that even if you despise me, you do it not out of conceitedness . . . but out of a kind of well-wishingness.' [1]

If we are to follow Jesus our indignation must be religious. There must be some sense of sharing the sins we would punish. What ought to come over us all in contemplating the wickedness into which men fall is the recollection that the creatures who have committed

[1] H. G. Wood, *Quakerism and the Future of the Church*, 41.

this evil are men of like passions with ourselves. There ought to be at least an element in our nature of overpowering shame that men can fall so low. That awful grief which Jesus showed in the presence of sin is His substitution for the senseless anger with which we are content. The one burns evil out of man, the other often only burns it in.

There ought to be a great desire to save evil men from their lower selves. Our methods, whether penal or martial, very rarely accomplish any such purpose. The only real way to make a man suffer for his wrongs would be to make him a better man. If a conscience could be developed in him, and he could come to see things as we see them, what agony he would pass through! God's method is apparently to let us see Himself.

While we stand impotent to-day before trades that imperil our national life, Jesus could sweep an unholy traffic out of the Temple courts with nothing but His flaming zeal for righteousness. The whip of rushes He is so often mentioned as using was only for driving out the beasts, as the original makes perfectly clear. He could brand for ever the hypocrisy of Pharisaism so that there can be no two opinions in the world again about that sin. By the self-sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross He wrought penitence in Israel that pricked such men into the Kingdom of God as St Paul. It was that Divine passion which is both wrath and love, destroying sin and saving the sinner, and He calls us to be like the Father in this very thing. Only thus shall we save the world, brand evil for what it is, and lift mankind a little further towards the light.

The Apostles

Mark iii. 14.—'And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach' (R.V.).

As His fame spread, and the work grew upon His hands, Jesus definitely fixed the number of His intimates and helpers at twelve. The number is significant and symbolical. 'He appointed twelve,' says Dr Chadwick, 'in clear allusion to the tribes of a new Israel, a spiritual circumcision, another peculiar people.' All the Evangelists connect the choice of the Twelve with the flocking of multitudes to Jesus, and both Mark and Luke make the scene of it a mountain. Probably it was connected in tradition with that particular mountain on which Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount. As the choice and appointment of these men was one of the most important and critical things that Jesus ever did, we are not surprised to read in Luke that He spent the whole of the previous night in prayer to God. The future of His work depended on His choosing the right men, and He needed to be guided to those whom the Father had given to Him: 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.'

1. *The Reasons for the Calling of the Twelve.*—The reasons that induced Jesus to call the Twelve seem to have been at least three.

(1) From the way in which the verse is worded we may gather that one reason why Jesus called the Twelve was that *He needed human sympathy.* 'He appointed twelve,' says Mark, 'that they might be with him.' Nothing is more touching in the record of our Lord's life than His hunger for human sympathy. He longed for loving and trusty friends. He was only in the early stages of His career at this time. But already it had become evident to Him that it was a sorrowful way He had to tread. Already priests and elders and scribes had begun to thwart, to oppose, to persecute Him. Already Jesus read rejection as His fate. And, true man as He was, He longed for a few real and honest souls who would befriend Him whatever might happen. And so He appointed twelve 'that they might be with him.' And the faithful sympathy of the Twelve went to the very heart of Christ. 'Ye are they,' He said, with loving gratitude in the Upper Room on the night before He died, 'ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.'

(2) But another and more important reason for the calling of the Twelve was this—Christ *needed help in His work.* Up to this point Jesus had been working alone. His preaching had created great excitement, and the people crowded to hear Him, but of necessity His labours had been confined to a small area. It was only a few towns in Galilee that had enjoyed the privilege of hearing Him preach. But wherever Christ looked, He saw people hungering for the gospel He had brought. 'The harvest truly is plenteous,' He said, 'but the labourers are few.' Just as in later days Barnabas, finding the work at Antioch becoming

too much for him, sent to Tarsus for Paul; just as John Rough publicly from the pulpit of St Andrew's summoned John Knox to his assistance in the work of the ministry; just as John Wesley wrote from Georgia to George Whitefield, saying, 'Only Mr Delamotte is with me, till God shall stir up the hearts of some of His servants, who, putting their lives in their hands, shall come over and help us where the harvest is so great and the labourers are so few. What if thou art the man, Mr Whitefield?' So now, to cope with the growing work, Jesus summoned these twelve men that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.

(3) The third reason for the calling of the Twelve was that Christ was taking forethought for *the continuance of His work after He was gone.* 'A man's thoughts,' says Herbert Spencer, 'are like children born to him: he will not willingly let them die.' Most men seek to perpetuate their influence by putting the truth they have to teach into writing. Plato wrote his 'Republic,' Aristotle his 'Philosophy,' Dante his great poem on 'Purgatory' and 'Hell' and 'Paradise,' Shakespeare his 'King Lear' and his 'Hamlet,' Milton his 'Paradise Lost.' But Christ never wrote a single line. Instead of writing books, He chose the Twelve. For Christ's greatest gift to the world was not His words, but Himself. The gospel is not so much in what He said, as in what He was and did. So He appointed twelve that they might be with Him; that they might not only hear His wondrous words, but might see His glorious life and behold His mighty works, and weep at His Cross and exult at His empty grave, and so become His witnesses in Jerusalem and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

2. *The Object and End of the Calling.*—When our Lord gathered the Twelve around Him He had a two-fold object in view. He called these men in order that He might train them, and that He might send them forth to preach.

(1) To be with Jesus, and to be taught by Him, is the privilege for which all generations since have envied the Twelve. They went about with Him continually; they saw all His miracles; they heard all His discourses; they daily listened to His table-talk, and could consult Him about anything in His public utterances which they had not understood or about which they wished to make further inquiry; they saw His life at close quarters and felt the influence of His character. The followers of a Socrates, the catechumens of an Ambrose, the students of a Tholuck, the pupils of an Arnold, have informed the world of the magnetism with which their teachers held them; but no man ever spake and no teacher ever charmed like this One.

¶ Socrates is reported as speaking with one of his disciples—the worst and most unsuccessful of all—Alcibiades, who remarked, 'I always feel better when in the same house with you. Not only so, I feel better still if I get into the same room with you. But, better than all, if I can sit by you and touch you.'

Nothing in His entire history is more wonderful than the way in which, whilst overwhelmed with external work, Jesus reserved Himself for the instruction of the Twelve. The results have abundantly justified His wisdom; and they supply an example, though one which has been rarely followed. Few even of the most earnest workers for the many have at the same time been able to think of the few. It requires rare gifts; yet a few followers highly trained and acquainted with the deep things of God may be a far more valuable legacy to the Church and the world than multitudes converted to a superficial or ordinary Christianity.

¶ I remember once standing waiting on a Clyde ferry-boat at Glasgow. I was a student at the University then, and wore the red scarlet cloak which the students had to wear. The old ferryman looked at me and said, 'You're a student. What are you going to be?' 'A minister,' I replied. 'A minister?' said he, 'you don't need to go to College for that. The Apostles were never at College, and they were better ministers than the most about here.' 'Never at College?' said I. 'They were three years there, and studied under the best of all professors, Jesus Christ.'[1]

(2) Then, secondly, He called the Twelve with the intention of sending them forth to preach. They were to learn of Jesus in order that they might teach others. Their time of fellowship was meant to prepare them for their time of service. They were called to be disciples—that is, 'learners'—in order that they might become Apostles—that is, 'men sent.' The end of the *calling* was the *sending.*

'Chosen,' says Luke of these Twelve, 'to be Apostles.' Chosen what for? Just to be with

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay, *The Men Whom Jesus Made*, 12.

Christ, enjoying His sweet and blessed fellowship? No, chosen that they might be sent; saved that they might save others; blessed that they might become a blessing; redeemed that they might preach the gospel of redemption; chosen that they might bear Christ's name before governors and kings and before the children of Israel, and suffer many things for that Name's sake—chosen in order that they might be sent. And the calling and the sending still go hand-in-hand. We delight to think that we have been called—called of God! But to what have we been called? Called to fellowship with Christ? Yes, primarily, but that is not the end of our calling. He has appointed us to be with Him, that He may send us forth. We have been called in order that we may be sent to do Christ's work, to proclaim Christ's name. Have we always remembered this? Have not some of us, while rejoicing in the 'calling' and the 'choosing,' forgotten all about the 'sending'? Have not some of us been disciples for years without having become apostles yet? If there is one thing Christian men and women need to realize to-day, it is that discipleship must issue in apostleship, that we are called in order that we may be sent—that while chosen for high privilege and glorious honour, we are above all things chosen for strenuous and loving service.

The Son of Thunder

Mark iii. 17.—'He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.'

Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee were the leaders of the Twelve Apostles. They were the chosen companions of their Lord in the most solemn scenes of His ministry. There must have been a reason for that close companionship with the Master, for that supremacy over their brethren; for the position was assumed from the very first, it was not conceded later on as the reward of meritorious discipleship. Mr Latham has pointed out in his 'Pastor Pastorum' that the principle of selection adopted by our Lord in His choice of Apostles mainly depended on the test of character. Strength, independence, variety, were what He sought for and found. His object was to associate with Himself twelve men of different types, having strongly marked individualities of their own, incapable of merely reproducing and reflecting one another. He was wiser than we are, with our love of uniformity, our anxiety to impress upon Christian teachers the stamp of some stereotyped school, our impatience of different forms of thought and opposite ways of looking at things.

So we must look for the secret of the pre-eminence of John in his own character. If the surname 'Boanerges' was a term of reproach, it was also, most assuredly, a title of honour, for by it and through it our Lord recognized in the characters of the two brothers that which He valued, a fire of love, a strength of enthusiasm, a might of conviction and of energy, which, however much perverted to evil uses for the time being, contained potentially the splendid achievements of the hero, the martyr, the saint.

¶ Raphael painted a portrait of St John. He showed the best-beloved of the Apostles as one with a face like a woman's face, but seated on the back of an eagle soaring. Most people retain that womanly face in the thought they have of John, but the eagle has taken flight from the image they form of him. We tend to think of John as the youthful devotee who lay with his head on the breast of Jesus at the Holy Supper. There we leave him, forgetting that he alighted there with an eagle's wings, and that he arose thence on an eagle's pinions which carry us up nearer heaven than any others do in the whole heavenward flight of the New Testament.[1]

It is clear that that must have been a singularly beautiful and noble type of the Christian character which earned the title of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'; and we may well fasten on those incidents of the scanty records which throw light on the qualities which explain why this honour was bestowed upon John the son of Zebedee.

1. It is probable that John was specially beloved by Jesus as the disciple of the pure soul and the unstained experience. We speak much of the sympathy which Jesus felt for those whose lives had been a moral tragedy—who through sin and folly had reduced themselves to a state of wretchedness, and earned the contempt of society. Among His disciples, it would appear, there were not a few men and women with a disreputable past who owed to Him a new faith in God and in themselves, and also the power to make a fresh beginning in the ways of purity and righteousness. It was, in

[1] A Boyd Scott, *The Twelve Take Stock of Us*, 30.

fact, one of the charges made against Jesus by the religious authorities that He sought the society of men and women whose touch brought defilement, and it was also declared by Him to be one of the evidences of His Divine mission that His gospel proved itself to be a power for restoring sinners such as rejoiced the angels of God. But there is no reason to suppose that John had had anything in common with the publicans and sinners. We know that his mother was a woman of piety and devotion; that at an early age he journeyed to the Jordan valley to listen to the last of the prophets; that he joined himself to John the Baptist; and that, when the greater came within his vision, he acknowledged the spell of Christ, and was ready to follow Him whithersoever He should go, even to the world's end. The worst sinners appealed to the compassion of Jesus, and through repentance and faith could become His friends; but it would appear that it was one whose life had moved along the same lines as that of the sinless Christ, who, though earth-bound by sin and sense, had at least loved to breathe the air of the mountain-top, one who, though not unspotted by the evil, was at least unpolluted by the mire of the world, that won his way farthest into the heart of Christ. It is possible that preachers have dwelt with too great partiality on the love of Jesus for those who have played the prodigal. It is true that Christ had a great pity and a great gospel for those who had been their own worst enemies. It is true also that some of the saints have served God well after an early life of wickedness and shame. But in the later ages of the Church it is not thus that Christ has won the main body of His best disciples. These are they who have passed through a discipline and an experience such as John's who have set their face from the beginning for the highest.

¶ 'There is a tendency,' says Principal W. M. Clow, 'which hectic modern literature and morbid preaching are emphasizing, to think that the man or woman who has not had a wild and wayward outburst in the days of youth is a poor, pale-blooded creature. There seems to be with some the impression that a rake makes the finest saint, that his devotion has a richer and deeper colour than that of the unspotted soul. Surely this is one of the wiles of the devil.'

2. The beloved disciple was one who himself had the power of deeply loving. In him Christ found a copy of the love wherewith He Himself loved the Father in Heaven and His brethren of mankind. It is taken for granted, in the Epistles which bear the name of St John, that the soul of religion is to love God because He first loved us. And with no lesser emphasis is it laid down that there is no real love of the invisible God which has not as its other side the love of our brother whom we have seen. And his love to God and man was focused in his love for the Christ, in whom he found the meeting-place of God and man. If Jesus loved him more than the rest, it doubtless was because Jesus was surest that in him His own love was repaid in degree. When Jesus had returned to the Father, it was taught in the Gospel which bears the disciple's name that the sovereign good of religious experience is the realization of the spiritual presence, and the enjoyment of the mystic friendship of the same Christ. Still He will make His abode with those who love Him and keep His word. It will be the privilege not of one but of many to recline in His bosom.

The sovereign demand which is made upon us as Christians is the demand for love. It has its heavenly objects in God and His Christ, its earthly objects in those of our fellow-men who are given us to cherish and to serve. And it is not easy, or altogether necessary, to separate these forms of love according to the difference of their objects. There can be no true love of God, St John tells us, which does not reveal itself on earth as goodwill to men; and on the other hand, where we meet with a love to man of the Christlike kind—embracing in its sweep those who have deserved nothing of us, and finding in ability to help the one rule of service—we may believe that such love of man involves no small measure of the reality of love toward God.

3. Another feature of the character of the beloved disciple was a power of holy wrath. The Sea of Galilee, it has been said, was an image of his soul. He was like to it in its repose, and also in its tumult when a storm swept down upon it from Lebanon, and dashed its angry billows on the shore. The capacity of fierce indignation is evident even in the pages of the Gospel, which glows with a heavenly tenderness and sums up all in the gospel of Divine and human love. There is a note of amazed horror

when he records the wickedness which blinded the adversaries of Jesus to the grace and glory of the Son of God, and which prompted their conspiracy to compass the destruction of the Holy One and the Just. There is also an accent of splendid scorn in the account given of the miserable motives which inspired the treachery of Judas. It is true that he was rebuked by Jesus because his indignation was on more than one occasion uninstructed and misplaced, as it was ruled out by conflicting claims of charity or forgiveness. But the capacity of righteous indignation was not in itself displeasing to Jesus.

Jesus Himself exhibited this spirit of holy wrath, and it is important to observe how in practice He distinguished between sins to which the proper reply is forgiveness, and sins which provoke public condemnation and challenge to open resistance. We may distinguish sins against ourselves, sins which are wrought against our fellow-men, and sins which in a peculiar sense are an affront to the holy majesty of God. And we observe that the spirit and attitude of Jesus towards sin varied widely according as it bore one or other of these special characters. In presence of wickedness which directed its rage and venom against Himself, He met it with meekness and clemency, and He enjoined His disciples in like manner to turn the other cheek to the smiter. But Jesus felt very differently, and spoke very differently, in regard to those evil-doers whose sin took the special form of injustice and cruelty towards others, especially when the victims were helpless and defenceless folk. 'Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.' In like manner His soul was stirred by sins of hypocrisy or profanity which had the distinctive character of an insult to the Divine Majesty. The sin of hypocrisy was to Him so loathsome that in the indictment of the Scribes he mentioned it along with the devouring of widows' houses. Every form of impiety that profaned the holy things of God—swearing lightly by His name, violation of the spirit of His holy day, corruption of His word by the traditions of men—was named as a sin which cried to heaven with aggravated guilt.

¶ To those who knew him Dr Andrew Bonar was the likest man to John they had ever seen. He was the incarnation of gentleness and love, and yet my father once told me that when sitting with him at Edinburgh in a train that was about to bring them home from the May meetings there, he had seen Dr Bonar's anger blaze out like a very Son of Thunder. An intoxicated man came into the carriage and began to swear at them, as such men often do to ministers. Dr Bonar bore it in silence till the man took the name of Jesus Christ upon his lips, then his whole countenance changed. His face blazed with indignation. He called a guard and had him swept out of the carriage in a moment. The man was cowed to silence and left without a word. My father was amazed at the passion of indignation which had welled out so suddenly from one who in ordinary life was a very incarnation of meekness.[1]

4. In the example and teaching of our Lord there is the inspiration for a more complex and a stronger type of Christianity than is commonly favoured in modern teaching. It has been often and well said that the character of Christ combined the virtues of manhood with the graces of womanhood, but there has been an increasing tendency to identify Christianity with the womanly side of His ideal, and to leave it to other agencies than His Church to exemplify the more distinctive qualities of the manhood of Christ. But we are bound, as we would do honour to Christ and be faithful to the best tradition of the Church, to take a stand for the richer and stronger conception of what is involved in the following of Christ. It cannot involve less than that as Christians we feel ourselves bound to sympathize with everything in politics as well as in mission-work that makes for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God, displaying the virtue of courage and the passion for justice while we cultivate the graces of sympathy and patience, holding that for the manifold work of our rough world God has need of every means. On the head of Christ are many crowns; and the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh which the Magi once laid at His feet were the earnest of richer and more manifold gifts to be furnished out of the whole wealth of the nature of man. 'Quit you like men,' said the Apostle, who also knew that the first commandment is to turn and become as little children. God hath given us a spirit of love, but also a spirit of power and of a sound mind.

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay, *The Men Whom Jesus Made*, 66.

Spiritual Suicide

Mark iii. 28-30.—'Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.'—(R.V.).

These words form what is perhaps the gravest warning that can be found in the whole of Scripture. They are startling in the extreme, and their effect is heightened when we remember that they come from the lips, not of some stern Hebrew prophet, but of Him who was so slow to condemn, so full of hope for even the weakest things of the world. All the more, then, is this warning to be pondered and heeded.

There are two reasons why we ought to inquire into the meaning of these words. The first and obvious one is this: the very gravity of the warning makes it incumbent upon us to understand, in order that we may ourselves keep free from the danger. Little restrictions we may affect to ignore, but not a word of this tremendous import. The issues are too large for us to pass it by. But there is another reason which makes it necessary to inquire into the meaning of this sentence. In practical experience it has been found that this text, more than any other in Scripture, has weighed down like a nightmare burden upon souls inclined to gloom and self-despair. There are certain temperaments which incline all too easily along that way. They read a severe word such as this, and then with their introspective habit of mind, with their morbid imaginings, they fear that unwittingly they may have committed the sin which is described.

¶ 'I shall never forget,' says Dr Samuel Cox, 'the chill that struck into my childish heart so often as I heard of this mysterious sin which carried men, and for aught I knew might have carried even me, beyond all reach of pardon; or the wonder and perplexity with which I used to ask myself why, if this sin was possible—if, as the words of our Lord seem to imply, it was probable even and by no means infrequent—it was not clearly defined, so that we might at least know, and know beyond all doubt, whether it had been committed or had not. And, since then, I have again and again met with men and women of tender conscience and devout spirit who, by long brooding over these terrible words, had convinced themselves that they had fallen, inadvertently for the most part, into this fatal sin, and whose reason had been unbalanced by a fearful anticipation of the doom they held themselves to have provoked.'

¶ Cowper, as is well known, was constantly oppressed, holy man as he was, with an awful consciousness that God had eternally cast him off, the most awful type of mania. At last it was removed, but only at the very last.

Where a danger of this kind exists we ought to remove it by clear thought and understanding. And we can say at once, with all confidence, that the sin against the Holy Ghost of which Christ speaks here is not a sin into which men can fall without knowing it. It is not a single act at all; it is a permanent condition of heart and soul.

1. If we are to understand the meaning of the text we must interpret it through the circumstances which surround its first utterance.

Our Lord was speaking to men who stood in His presence, and He was warning them of this great danger. Who were the men? And what had they done to call for this rebuke? The men to whom He spoke were certain Scribes who had come down from Jerusalem to spy upon His doings. They had come with the sole intention of finding in His words and works that which would give them ground for accusations.

What did they find? They saw Him as He healed the sick. Here were men and women who, according to the thought of that time, were possessed by evil spirits. The Scribes saw Jesus casting out the evil spirits, and restoring men and women to health and soundness of mind. It was obviously a good work, a work of love; no one could doubt the goodness or the gain of it—lives to whom health was given back. Well, these Scribes saw a work which was obviously good, and what did they say? They said: 'This man casteth out evil spirits by the power of the Evil One.' In a word, their judgment was that this good work was evil; it came of the Evil One himself. That was all they could see in the healing ministry of Christ, or rather, that was all they chose to see. They saw good and they called it evil. Now we pass from their judgment to the way in which Jesus received it. He first of all showed how absurd it was, and He did that for the benefit of the

people who were being carried away by the Scribes' verdict. He said, surely a house which is divided against itself cannot stand! If Satan afflicts these poor bodies and then heals them, he is simply undoing his own work, which is an absurd thought. Evil does not conquer evil any more than goodness overthrows goodness. That was just a simple common-sense word for the sake of the crowd who stood around. But the Master turned upon His accusers. 'You say,' He replied, 'that by the power of evil I cast out evil. You see a good work, and you attribute it to an evil agency. You see lives released from bondage, lives made whole again, and you say that is the work of Satan. That judgment brings you into the greatest peril of the human soul. You see the work of God and you call it the work of the Evil One. That is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God. It is calling evil good and good evil. Such a sin as that has no forgiveness.'

2. We are in a better position now to understand what the phrase, 'the sin against the Holy Ghost,' means. It is a state of moral blindness in which the eye cannot discern the good from the evil, and the mind is so lost in darkness that it attributes goodness to evil.

It is hard for us to conceive such a state at all. We cannot imagine men morally blind. But this is the state to which all sin tends. Those who live in sin without regret or repentance, those whose daily outlook upon life is unclean, let us say, or selfish, tend gradually to that state in which they are unable to discern between the pure and the impure, the selfish and the unselfish. And, if they do not reach those depths, at least they lose their appreciation of the finest things. Purity and love no longer seem things to be desired. Do we not know some such experience as this? We make terms with some evil thing, and go on indulging it until we lose all sense that it is evil. In relation to that defect we are morally blind. The eye which is called conscience loses its sensitiveness to that one colour in the moral spectrum.

¶ In the dark waters of the mammoth caves of Kentucky there live certain little creatures that were once gifted with sight but have lost the power because they have dwelt in darkness. The eyes are still there to all outward appearance, but they no longer see.

O! worst of punishments, that brings
A blunting of all finer sense,
A loss of feelings keen, intense,
And dulls us to the higher things.

O! shape more hideous and more dread
Than Vengeance takes in creed-taught minds,
This certain doom that blunts and blinds,
And strikes the holiest feelings dead.[1]

'The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' That is the sin against the Holy Spirit—the deliberate blinding of the eye of the soul, the loss of the power to see and appreciate the highest things. If only men understood what it means, they would not fear they had committed this sin while they were anxious and troubled about it. The very fact that they feel remorse and sorrow is proof enough that they have not lost their power of sight. If we can imagine a human soul in this dread condition we must picture him as insensitive altogether—not caring, not troubling, but contented and at ease. That is the state to be shunned.

3. How is it that this state of sin has no forgiveness? The sentence sounds terrible and harsh. If we think of it as the infliction of God's anger, His outraged will, it will introduce a note of dread into all our thoughts of Him. But that is not so. The meaning of this sentence is not that God refuses to forgive, but that He cannot forgive. On what terms is forgiveness possible? Forgiveness is not the palliation of an offence. It is not an easy-going extension of pardon to a man who intends to continue in his wrong-doing. Forgiveness is the spirit in which God meets the man who repents of what he has done, and has made a resolve to do better. The one condition of forgiveness is repentance. It is so in our human relationships. Forgiveness has no meaning at all except it be the new relationship between two lives, both of whom have a part to play in it. So it is with God's forgiveness. He cannot forgive until the soul of man has seen that there is something to be forgiven and asks for it.

Now bring that thought to the text. Here is a man who has lost his desire for the highest

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

things; then one fact is certain—that man cannot repent. He has lost the power to do so. And that is the secret of the sin that hath no forgiveness. As to whether any human soul has reached that hopeless doom we cannot say. Our Lord here points out the danger, and it is a real one. Man is free, and by his own choice he may dwell amidst things of evil. He cannot be saved in spite of himself. No power outside his own heart can lift him to newness of life.

¶ Whittier wrote within a twelvemonth of his death: 'I do believe that we take with us into the next world the same freedom of will as we have here, and that *there*, as *here*, he that turns to the Lord will find mercy; that God never ceases to follow His creatures with love, and is always ready to hear the prayer of the penitent. But I also believe that *now* is the accepted time, and that he who dallies with sin may find the chains of evil habit too strong to break in this world or the other.' And the following is the Quaker poet's verse:

Though God be good and free be heaven,
  No force divine can love compel;
. . . . .
The sweet persuasion of His voice
  Respects thy sanctity of will.
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
  To walk in darkness still;

No word of doom may shut thee out,
  No wind of wrath may downward whirl,
No swords of fire keep watch about
  The open gates of pearl;

Forever round the Mercy-seat
  The guiding lights of Love shall burn;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
  Shall lack the will to turn?

The Holy Family

Mark iii. 35.—'For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.'

All three Evangelists give this striking incident in the life of our Lord. Of the three accounts, that of Mark is the most primitive form of the story. It presents the incident in a connection which is probably the historical one, according to which the interruption of our Lord's discourse takes place shortly after a somewhat similar occasion, when His kinsmen had endeavoured to stop Jesus or imprison or detain Him on the ground that His reason was affected, and when the Scribes and Pharisees had taken up the same misunderstanding in a grosser form by attributing His power to the indwelling of an evil spirit.

It is well to bear this sequence in mind when we try to interpret the account; for it furnishes us with the interpretation of the disturbance of our Lord's teaching by placing it in line with other movements of a distinctly hostile character. The message sent by His mother and His brethren was no casual remark of bystanders; it was a distinct interference with His mission. There were points in Christ's life when He shared in His own person the experience which He predicted for His followers—that a man's foes should be they of his own household. More than once He quoted the proverb, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country'; but He added, 'and among his own kin, and in his own house!' What pathos is in the words of the Fourth Gospel: 'For neither did his own brothers believe in him.' They thought Him a dreamer, teaching unrealities. What we marvel at is the quick and revealing insight with which our Lord used the incident to teach one of the grandest truths ever taught on earth. 'Whosoever shall do the will of God the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.' There could be only one Holy Family.

These words express to us to-day, when we hear them superficially, much the same thought as would have been suggested to the circle of listeners by the words 'His mother' and 'His brethren.' They are the terms which we employ, for example, when we refer to the efforts made by the great painters of past days to represent in visible form the links between our Lord and the humanity which He had embraced. When we say 'The Holy Family,' we call up before our minds one great picture after another which bears the name: perhaps it is a picture of our Lord and His mother, with St Elizabeth and St John the Baptist, or it is the cave at Bethlehem, lighted with unearthly splendour, where the human forms are flanked by the ox that knew his owner and the ass that recognized his master's crib; or it is some one of those many forms in which the painters repre-

sent the Adoration and Love which must have marked the earliest days of the Son of Man. We shall never cease to love the great masters for the way in which they spent themselves on this subject, and there are some of their treatments of it of which the world will never weary, because child-life and mother-love have been so glorified in them.

But now let us turn from the old masters to the Master Himself, and let us allow Him to paint the Holy Family for us. We find from the Gospel that His idea is quite different from the conventional one. The outward relationships vanish away; mother and brethren and sisters disappear, and other faces appear instead of theirs—listeners and learners, imitators of and sufferers with Himself, doers with Him of the Divine will. The truth 'Blessed is she that bare thee,' is overwritten by the larger language, 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it.'

1. There are two orders of relationship, one of the flesh, one of the spirit. First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual; and if the natural life has its fellowships the Divine life has also its fellowships. The ideal order is for the spiritual to grow up through the natural, as life's deeper meanings are made manifest. Sometimes our near relatives in the flesh are our real kinsmen in the spirit. It was so between Robert and Elizabeth Browning, in whom we see what marriage may be when it is touched and glorified by spiritual fellowship. What it means between mother and son is shown us in Augustine and Monica, after his conversion in the garden. In a noble passage in the 'Confessions' we see mother and son standing together in a window at Ostia, more truly akin than ever before, rapt away in the joy of insight and adoration. Thus, when the Divine life is quickened in a man, he enters into a new relationship, even with those whom he loved before.

Human life is an order of relationships, from the lower to the higher, and the worlds we live in grow in number and size as life unfolds. The family first brings us one to another. Into this sacred fellowship we are ushered without our leave, but as the years go by its beauty and mystery grow upon us, and its ties become more tender. Sometimes, alas, its ties are broken, yet some thread remains binding us to those to whom blood has united us. Soon our fellowships widen in concentric circles, and we enter other worlds in which blood-kinship plays no part. In school, in sport, in labour, in business, in citizenship, in myriad ways we are drawn into a vast network of fellowships. Similarities of taste, of temper, of training, of interest and experience unite us, revealing, by prophecy, the fact and possibility of a universal kinship. But our fellowships never realize their full beauty and power until they are lifted into a higher realm and become, in their affinities, spiritual. If we love anything less than the Divine in our friends we love only dust, and death will rob us. Hence the words of Jesus, revealing the higher kinship of all who love God and do His will, lifting all lower relationships into a purer air where they are more enduring.

2. This law must not be forgotten if the yearning for Christian union in our day is to find fulfilment. Compromise might be dangerous to the religious life, which, because it is life, means variety of experience and expression. Unity is what we want—the unity that has its roots in like-mindedness, in agreement of moral feeling; unity in liberty, fellowship in variety, comradeship in devotion to the will of God in whose service we discover our real brothers and sisters. In the chambers where good men pray no schism reigns. It is this deeper fellowship, this higher unity of things which differ, that we need to discover and realize, and then our lesser differences will be beauties, not barriers. In passion our fathers parted; in a Diviner passion their sons must unite.

¶ Wesley saw the truth when he said to the Christians of his day: 'Give me thine hand! I do not mean, be of my opinion; you need not. I do not expect or desire it, neither do I mean I will be of your opinion. . . . Keep your opinion and I mine, as steadily as ever. You need not endeavour to come over to me, or to bring me over to you. I do not desire to dispute points or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Only give me thine hand! I do not mean embrace my modes of worship, or I will embrace yours. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment; let all matters stand aside, let them never come into sight. If thine heart is as my heart, if thou love God and all mankind, I ask no more, give me thine hand!'

Because the truth is infinite, no man, no Church, can see more than a tiny segment of it. If we would blend together the personal and experimental note heard so clearly from the lips of Wesley, the note of faith in the historical and ordered life of the people of God which Newman sounded, something of that social passion never to be separated from the names of Maurice and Kingsley, and the missionary zeal of Carey and Morrison—if the Church of the future can fuse these motives and ideals it will be a revolutionary power, and the world will know the difference.

Here, no less, is the secret whereby we may realize the breadth and richness of life, making it a perpetual discovery of kinsmen near by, far off, long ago, in all lands, everywhere. As William Penn said in a noble passage: 'All just men, all devout men, all men who love and fear God are everywhere of one religion, and when death hath taken off the masks they will recognize one another.' But there is no need to wait until death for such a revelation, if we have the insight to recognize kindred spirits under different robes of language and habit.

¶ John Woolman, in his *Journal*, tells how he read a little book of the Following of Christ, by à Kempis, and found, not without surprise, a brother of his heart walking the quiet way of prayer. No two men could be more unlike in order and habit of life, or in ways of thinking—one a Quaker and the other a Catholic—yet they were kinsmen of the spirit, brothers in obedience to the will of God.

3. There is in this text a suggestion, if nothing more, of how real and warm and human the fellowship of heaven must be, when no longer we see through a glass darkly, but face to face. No one of us knows how many kinsmen of the spirit he has in the dim twilight of this world, in which there is so much to obscure and divide. Many will come from the East and the West and sit down in the Kingdom of Heaven, many who seemed far off, but were in truth near kinsmen of Christ in their spirit—the noble and true-hearted of all lands, of all ages, of all creeds, who fought for the right on the moral battle-fields of time. 'Other sheep' He has, who are not of our fold. The surprises of that fellowship will be equal to its joy, revealing those who were unknown kinsmen here below.

Many things mar our fellowship here, but those who are of the family are united in Christ, are brothers for ever, and not anything can sunder the tie that binds them:

> Kinsmen, Friend, and Elder Brother,
> Is His everlasting Name.

The Parable of the Soils

Mark iv. 3.—'Behold, there went out a sower to sow.'

This Parable had to be spoken. It gave expression to thoughts which burdened the mind of Jesus throughout His ministry. On the day He uttered it He had left the house and was sitting by the seaside, 'and there was gathered unto him a great multitude.' So He went into one of the ships moored at the shore, and the people stood on the land. As Jesus watched the crowd assembling, and perceived the various dispositions with which the people came, He could not but reflect how much of what He had to say must certainly be lost on many. He knew that He was looking into eyes which did not see, and speaking to ears that did not hear. He knew that many who seemed to listen and receive were really indifferent. He had 'many things to say' to them, things that never yet had fallen and never again could fall from human lips; and yet who, of the company gathered before Him, would believe? They had come, some out of curiosity—idle followers of the crowd; some from self-seeking motives; some out of hatred, seeking occasion against Him; but all thinking themselves entitled to hold and express an opinion regarding the importance or worthlessness of what He said. They needed to have their critical faculty exercised upon themselves, and to be reminded that in order to benefit by what He had to say, they must bring certain capacities. And so He spoke this Parable, which is strictly not a parable of the sower, or of the seed, but rather a Parable of the Soils.

There are four kinds of soil indicated in the Parable, and they represent four distinct types of hearer.

1. *The Wayside Soil.*—'Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.' When the

seed fell on the hard path that passed through the field or ran round its borders, it could not enter the soil, and so it was crushed by the wheel of the farmer's cart as it came along, or else was trodden under foot, or carried away by the birds of the air. This hardness of the soil, which does not admit the seed, points to the characteristic of the first of the four divisions into which our Lord divides His hearers, and this characteristic is the hardness of their hearts—their unreceptiveness.

There are lives that are a beaten track!—hardened not by heredity or crushing circumstance (as lives sometimes are), but self-hardened. This Parable, because its whole emphasis is on responsibility, so declares; and the indictment is made not in censure but in compassion. Why had such people come to listen to Jesus? To satisfy an idle curiosity, perhaps, or to follow the crowd, or to kill time! They were of the same soil as their brethren, but the soil had been trampled. They had made their souls a thoroughfare. Everything had gone over them—weddings, funerals, pleasures, trade; but nothing had stirred them to the depths. Finally they were impervious, a roadway for whatever procession of interests and happenings might choose to pass that way. Matthew's Gospel describes them in words of singular insight—poignant words on the lips of Jesus: 'When any one heareth the word . . . and understandeth it not.' They did not understand! There was a man who visited Rome and afterwards could recall nothing of the visit save that he had found a new gambling device: he did not understand the 'grandeur that was Rome!' There were people at Niagara Falls who hurried from that marvellous torrent to a cheap and crowded carnival: they did not understand that thunder-majesty! There are people to whom the Fifth Symphony is only a farrago of sounds: they do not understand Beethoven's spirit-rapture. So there were people who listened to Jesus and had no comprehension of His message. He spoke one tongue and they another. He lived in one world and they in another. He was always below the surface and they were always on the surface; they had made their lives a common pathway!

What could Jesus do? At the moment, nothing! Soon the birds would come and gather the seed. Some twittering interest, some new excitement, some trivial item of gossip would eat up all He had said. He could do nothing until God should drive a ploughshare of pain or loss in cruel mercy through their lives to make new furrows for the seed. Tragedy is indeed gain that compels men to meet life with serious purpose.[1]

2. *The Shallow Soil.*—'And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.' What we commonly understand by 'stony ground' is a field thickly strewn with small stones; not the best kind of soil, but quite available for growing corn. This is not the soil meant here. Our Lord speaks rather of rocky ground, where a thin surface of mould overlies an impenetrable rock. On such ground the seed quickly springs, there being no deepness of earth to allow of its spending time in rooting itself. And for the same reason it quickly withers when exposed to the fierce heats which benefit and mature strongly-rooted plants.

¶ A prosperous American farmer invited his pastor to visit England with him. At Shrewsbury they drove out to see the old Roman town of Uriconium. Part of the walls of the public bathhouse was still intact, and up that they scrambled to survey the site. The ground where the ancient town had once stood was now a field of wheat. It was waving its banners of green in the July sunshine as the wind swept leisurely across it. But radiating from a common centre, like the spokes of a wheel, ran broad strips of yellow, stunted grain.

'Well, I declare,' said Mr Robinson, 'if there isn't the diagram of the old town streets traced out in that yellow grain.'

'I don't see how you know that,' said the minister.

'Why, it's as clear as day,' replied the other. 'Where the old streets ran the ground is hard and infertile, and so the wheat that was sown on it is sickly and thin, and has ripened earlier than the rest.'

'I see it now,' said the minister, 'and I also see a sermon in it.'[2]

What we have here described is the emotional

[1] G. A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, 44.
[2] W. J. Hart.

type of hearer. To this class belong those who are full of fine impulses which, under the stimulus of some great truth, leap into a momentary enthusiasm. Because, however, these fine emotions are not taken up into thought, and woven by the hands of a resolute purpose into the permanent structure of character, they speedily subside, and leave behind them what perhaps can best be described as a moral collapse and total loss of interest, analogous to what on the Stock Exchange is called a 'slump.' True, there is no religious life worth the name without sentiment. But there is far too much sentiment without religion or even morality. To the full functioning of all its powers, the seed of truth must have the full freedom of the soil, that is to say, the whole soul must be at its call. The emotions of themselves are not sufficient.

It is to the will—the seat and centre of the moral nature—that the truth makes its ultimate appeal. A man's will must bow in allegiance to the truth, and unless this be the issue of emotion that man's religion is vain; it is a mere sentiment. It is a strengthless, compromising thing that goes down at the first blast of opposition.

¶ Dr Greville Macdonald, in his lectures at King's College, London, differentiated in this way between a growing spike of wheat and a bean-shoot in the same soil. He said that each rootlet is terminated by living protoplasmic cells, structureless, and identical, that of the bean with that of the wheat. Yet each differs in this extraordinary, although obviously essential, fact—that the minute servant-cells of the wheat select from the soil flint for the strengthening of the straw, while the bean's gleaners of its food reject the flint as unnecessary. The fact is that the wheat wants a backbone that will enable it to stand in its own right, and it runs down its roots to find the necessary stiffening; whereas the bean depends for its stiffening on the supports that are supplied it from outside, and without which it cannot stand.[1]

¶ If our Lord took the rootless man out of the life of Galilee and from among the hearers of His message, Bunyan took Pliable out of the difficult days of the Act of Uniformity. 'The hearing of this is enough to ravish one's heart,' said he to Christian's glowing descriptions of heaven: 'My good companion, glad am I to hear of these things; come on, let us mend our pace.' But this reception of the word 'with joy' was before the Slough of Despond: after that test, his tune was changed: 'May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me.' There is a phrase, hackneyed by much use—'the deepening of the spiritual life.' Does not our Lord's parable restore to that phrase its poetry, and, in so doing, does it not convince us of our need? [1]

Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.

But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe.[2]

3. *The Choked Soil.*—'And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.' Here no fault is found with the soil as to its deepness and goodness; but attention is drawn to the fact that the soil is not clean. There are thorns and weeds in it, which, in their later growth, outstrip the corn and choke it, and so no fruit is brought to perfection.

(1) It is noteworthy that our Lord expressly puts 'the cares of this world' among the thorns which strangle the growth of the true life. These cares, these so-called secular matters, are, of course, not wrong in themselves. They can all rightfully claim their share of our time and energies either in the home or in the world without. They are concerned with the anxieties by which every man is beset, what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed, as well as with the nobler cares of family and friends. They are called 'cares of this world' because, considered in themselves, they do not lead beyond the sphere of this world; and, since of necessity they must occupy the greater part of every man's life, they naturally tend to engross more and more his energies, aims, and aspirations, till at last the religious life has no room to flourish.

¶ The Bishop of London says that he asked a working man why he never came to church. 'Well,' he said, 'I have no objection to the

[1] H. Howard, *The Summits of the Soul*, 122.

[1] J. M. E. Ross. [2] J. H. Newman.

church. I think there is a great deal of nonsense spoken against the church, but the fact is, I simply have not time. You see I am working during the week: I go to a football match on Saturday afternoons, and then on Sundays I need to do little jobs in the garden.'

(2) By the side of these 'cares of the world' our Lord places 'the deceitfulness of riches.' This phrase means the deceit practised on the mind by riches. Though but an earthly and perishable possession, they appear to be a highly desirable one, as promising many kinds of satisfaction, as providing means for warding off anxiety, fencing life against hostility and securing it against discomfort. It is clear that, as far as we are overcome by worldly cares or the love of money, we are allowing the thorns to gain the mastery. Our confidence in God is constantly yielding to the fears and anxieties, to the jealousies and the rivalries that are begotten by our pursuit of lower things.

On the issue of such a life it is needless to dilate. On every aspect of it the word failure must sooner or later be writ large. While such a man seeks to make the best of both worlds, he fails to enjoy the good of either. He aims at ease and security and finds only disquiet, the interminable trouble and unrest that attend on the divided heart.

¶ In the quest for the Holy Grail the knight Gawain was shallow and his impulse soon withered, but Lancelot was 'our mightiest,' a man of magnificent parts. Yet Lancelot failed in the quest only less signally than Gawain, nor did he flinch to confess the cause of failure:

> but in me lived a sin
> So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
> Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
> Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
> And poisonous grew together, each as each,
> Not to be pluck'd asunder.

He failed because the soil of his life was 'thorny ground' in which the weeds 'growing up choked the word!' [1]

4. *The Good Soil.*—'And others fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.' The good ground has this for its one test—fruit-bearing. That alone is good soil in which the seed brings forth fruit. The meaning is that the one infallible mark of a true believer is his life. There is nothing else which proves beyond question that we have heard aright, and that the word has profited—nothing but the fruit of the Spirit. 'Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.'

But let us listen to the Lord telling us how it is that this last class of hearers come to so happy a result. He says in effect that it is because they have what the others lack. Bengel, in his exact, succinct way, has pointed out that in St Luke's version of this, the happier side of the message, we see precisely the opposite of the three unsatisfactory types. These nobler souls 'keep' the word, 'not as on the wayside.' They 'bring forth fruit,' 'not as among the thorns.' They bring it forth 'with patience,' 'not as on the rocky ground.' Thus it is that the good-soil hearers come to the fruit-bearing. It is just by 'taking heed how they hear,' breaking up the fallow ground by 'diligence, preparation, and prayer,' so that the seed in their case does not fall upon the wayside; receiving it with faith and love, that it may have root and deepness of earth in the day of trial; 'laying it up in their hearts,' giving it the first place in their thoughts and affections, and 'practising it in their lives.' [1]

Does the total impression of the Parable amount to pessimism or optimism? Let us note that our Lord says nothing about quantities or proportions. It is enough that He warns us well of what may be. Robertson of Brighton preached a great sermon on this Parable, after a confirmation service, when seven hundred young people had taken upon their consciences the vows of discipleship. It was a natural and instinctive hope that all this multitude of youthful lives should by and by walk with Christ in white, having proved themselves worthy. 'Experience,' he sadly said, 'forces us to correct that sanguine anticipation.' And with experience and this Parable, twin books of warning, open before him, he told of the risk, almost amounting to a certainty, that some would lose their innocence, some become frivolous and artificial, some be taken captive by the world's cold, deadening hand. Yet, if our Lord, like many of His wisest servants,

[1] G. A. Buttrick.

[1] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, 77.

warns us well of the risks, He deliberately chooses to close on the hopeful note. He would have us remember that, when hearts are truly open to the good seed, it can do so much and bring forth so much. *An hundredfold*!—now we hear the feet of the reapers coming, and their songs of rejoicing, as they thrust in their sickles and gather their sheaves. It is like the Lord of Love to leave us, after all, not despairing, but believing and expecting, for ourselves and for others.[1]

Father of Mercies, we have need
Of Thy preparing grace:
Let the same Hand that gives the seed
Provide a fruitful place.

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

TEACHING BY PARABLES

Mark iv. 11, 12.—And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand.

This is a hard saying. It seems, on the face of it, to mean that Jesus used His parables to conceal His doctrine from the people, that He deliberately threw dust in their eyes, so that they looked but could not see, and heard but could not understand. Everyone must feel at once that this is contrary to the whole purpose of the gospel and the spirit of the Master. And, accordingly, various suggestions have been made to meet the difficulty and find a possible interpretation.

It has been suggested by Jülicher in his work on the parables that this text is due to a misconception on the part of the disciples. While the true purpose of the parables—the purpose for which Jesus used them—was to reveal the truth in simple form, the disciples took up the mistaken idea that their apparent simplicity was a veil to hide deep mysteries, that their imagery was a kind of masonic language, intelligible only to the initiated. Now it is well known that philosophers in ancient times were accustomed to teach after this manner. They taught simple truths to the multitude but they reserved their deeper teaching for the inner circle of their disciples, and this esoteric doctrine was often jealously guarded like a valuable trade secret, because it was held to be the only really enlightening and saving truth. It is also well known that in the Early Church there rose up men of this type who would fain have it that simple faith was good enough for the ignorant, but that a deeper knowledge of Divine things was possible to the learned. But the Church from the first utterly rejected this distinction, affirming that the whole of saving truth is for all believers. It is probably this that St Paul has in mind when, writing to the Colossians (i. 28), he declares with repeated emphasis how he preached 'warning every man, and teaching every man in all widsom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'

It has also been pointed out, in mitigation of the difficulty, that, while Mark uses a conjunction denoting purpose (ἵνα), Matthew uses a conjunction denoting result (ὅτι). Moreover there is some ground for believing that in the Greek of the New Testament age Mark's word (ἵνα) no longer expressed a purpose ('in order that') but simply a result ('so that'). There may be something in this, for the difference is obvious between doing a thing in order that a certain result may follow, and doing it while foreseeing that a certain result is inevitable. For instance, a general leads his men to battle, not in order that many of them may be slain, but knowing that such will be the inevitable result. He has no wish that a single one of them should perish, but he has to take the risk, and he is justified in taking the risk if the safety of his country and the welfare of millions is at stake. So, it might be said, our Lord found it necessary, in the interests of the Kingdom of God and for the salvation of men, to utter His teaching in parables, while yet He knew that the inevitable result would be to cast a veil over the eyes of some and confuse their understanding.

We have here, therefore, brought before us the twofold power of the parable, at once to reveal and to veil the truth, and it may be well for us seriously to ponder this matter, so that

we may avoid the error of those over whose darkened eyes the parable casts a veil.

I

Revealing the Truth

Our Lord, it may reverently be said, was faced in His teaching with the most difficult of all problems: how to make heavenly things intelligible to earthly minds. We hear Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, asking like a bewildered child, 'How can these things be?' and Jesus replying in astonishment, 'Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things? If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?' *There* was the problem—how to get the heavenly message across. And especially when teaching simple peasants and lake-shore folk, how could it be made level to their understandings? Ruskin's words should never be forgotten by any preacher. 'It is clearly necessary,' he says, 'from the beginning to the end of time, that God's way of revealing Himself to His creatures should be a *simple* way, which *all* those creatures may understand.'[1] It was doubtless with this end solely in view, to make Divine things plain to simple folk, that Jesus made use of parables in His teaching, and we can see how admirably adapted to this end the parables are.

(1) The parables are simple and memorable. Everybody loves a story, and all who have experience in public speaking know how instantly the eyes of the audience brighten up at the least suggestion of one. The peoples of the East are particularly fond of teaching given in this form. They are born story-tellers and tireless listeners. Much of their best wisdom is embodied in fables and parables. But, indeed, the same is true of all nations. A story, in itself simple and such as can be understood and remembered by a child, is made the vehicle of instruction, the shell within which a kernel of precious truth is kept safe till such time as it can be assimilated. Even so did the Divine Teacher deal with men when He would bring heavenly truth within the scope of human understanding.

[1] *Modern Painters*, Part V., chap. vi.

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.[1]

(2) The parables are profoundly natural. Dean Inge has well said, 'Almost all teaching consists in comparing the unknown with the known, the strange with the familiar. We are hardly able to explain what anything is, except by saying that it is like something else.'[2] It is hardly possible in speech or writing to escape away from the pictorial. The very letters of our alphabet were originally pictures. A was an ox, B was a house, and so on. Let a writer be never so severely scientific, never so abstractly philosophical, yet if his language be traced to its roots, he will be found to be expressing himself in pictures. Religion is no exception to this rule, but, on the contrary, furnishes the strongest examples of it. Religious teachers have been compelled to give full scope to their imaginations in their attempts to give definiteness and substance to the formless intuitions of the religious consciousness. In their endeavour to make the unseen visible and the spiritual real to men's minds they have to make use of pictures and symbols. They can only say, as our Lord said so often, 'The kingdom of God is like' this or that.

Now it must not be supposed that these similitudes are merely arbitrary, that they amount to nothing more than the momentary joining together of things which are essentially different. Some have maintained that they are simply fancy pictures with no facts to correspond, castles in the clouds with no solid foundation, mere projections of the human mind which carry with them no guarantee of Divine realities. But, as Trench has well pointed out, 'Their power lies deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations, happily but yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.
[2] *Modern Churchman*, xi. 659.

constituted for that very end.'[1] Milton represents the angel who is teaching Adam as questioning how best to communicate Divine truth to man, 'how shall I relate to human sense the invisible? . . . how unfold the secrets of another world?' And the method is thus described,

what surmounts the reach
Of human sense I shall delineate so,
By likening spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best—though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like more than on Earth is thought![2]

This means that the realms of Nature and of spirit are not two diverse worlds, but are two halves of the same world. And none can tell how closely they are conjoined, and what light each may throw upon the other. 'The invisible things of God,' says St Paul, 'from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead' (Rom. i. 20). It may be doubted how far sinful man, unaided by some Divine interpreter, could have read the parable of Nature aright, and gained through it a saving knowledge of eternal truth. The history of religions has many a dark page of tragic misconceptions. But to the eyes of Jesus Nature became luminous, the whole earth was seen to be 'crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God.'

(3) The parables are illuminating. There is nothing to equal them, even in Scripture, for their power of lighting up Divine things. They furnish our minds with imagery which helps us to see the unseen, and to gain a firm hold of spiritual truths which otherwise would elude our grasp. The parable of the Prodigal Son gives us a picture of God, the birds and the flowers teach us of His providence. We think of the Saviour as the Good Shepherd, of His salvation as a pearl of great price, of His service as work in a vineyard, of the joy of His Kingdom as a marriage feast. The wheat and the tares warn us of spiritual perils, the unlit lamp calls us to watchfulness, the corn of wheat falling into the ground speaks to us of death and resurrection. Every room in the Palace Beautiful is illuminated by these heavenly lamps, so that no child of the house need grope in the dark.

[1] *Parables*, 13. [2] *Paradise Lost*, v., 571.

II

Veiling the Truth

But there is another side. Where the parable does not reveal, it veils the truth. To some, instead of a guide, it becomes a stumbling block. One could imagine some of the learned scribes reporting on the parables after this manner. 'We went to hear this Jesus of Nazareth but we were completely disappointed. There was no spiritual teaching, no deep discussions, no quoting of authorities. He just told a few simple stories to amuse the ignorant multitude, but there was nothing in His teaching worthy of the attention of the learned.' Not only so, but some of the common people also would be offended. Ignorant people love big words and high-sounding phrases. For such the parables would be all too simple. 'What did He preach about? Nothing. He just talked about a sower sowing his seed. As if we didn't know all about that already! We don't need to go to church to hear about that.' So they would say, because to their blind eyes the parable was a veil.

Now, such response was blameworthy, the fruit of hard-hearted pride and stubborn prejudice. None the less it was inevitable, human nature being what it is. And so it is ever a solemn thing to preach to men. The preacher's aim is to enlighten, but he knows that his words will only darken counsel in some benighted minds. St Paul found, as he travelled far and wide preaching the Word, that to some it was 'a savour of life unto life,' but to others 'a savour of death unto death' (2 Cor. ii. 16). Preaching has always this twofold effect of revealing and veiling, of quickening and hardening. It leaves no man as it found him, but either the better or the worse. The missionary carrying the gospel to a heathen land is faced with this prospect. 'I bring them a message of salvation, but what if they refuse? Their condemnation will then be more severe, for the greater the light the greater the guilt. Yet I must take the risk, for the Word must be preached.'

It was this prospect that Jesus had in view when He began to teach in parables. He recalls the experience of Isaiah who found that his

message seemed only to blind the eyes of the people and to harden their hearts. So deeply was the prophet impressed by the inevitableness of this result that he could only attribute it to the will of God. He boldly declares it to have been part of his instructions when he received his commission as a prophet. This is an Eastern way of speaking, for the peoples of the East are accustomed to attribute directly to the will of God whatever seems to happen inevitably, in cases where we should rather speak of human responsibility and the operation of natural law. The prophet does not mean to deny the moral responsibility and guilt of his people, but he feels that they were so far gone in sin that they could hardly fail to reject his message, and he is sure that God took all this into account when He ordained him to be a prophet.

Jesus had the same solemn outlook, and He has expressed it in the first of all His parables, the parable of the Sower. The Sower sows the good seed, but He knows that some will fall by the wayside and be devoured, some will fall among thorns and be choked, some will fall upon stony ground and be withered up. Only part of it will fall into good soil and grow till the harvest. Yet, in spite of all this risk and loss, the good seed must be sown. Nor is this all. In His second parable Jesus tells of another danger, how the enemy will also be busy sowing his seed, till it may seem as if the field were bringing forth tares instead of wheat. The only thing is to have patience and leave all in the hands of God. Doubtless in the harvest He will unerringly separate and order all things aright and justify His ways with men.

There is something awe-inspiring, and even terrible, in the calmness with which Jesus contemplates this issue of His ministry. 'For judgment I am come into this world,' He said, 'that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind' (Jn. ix. 39). Again, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin' (Jn. xv. 22). And yet again, when the disciples came in a flutter to tell Him that the Pharisees were offended at something He had said, He replied, with awful serenity, 'Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch' (Mt. xv. 13, 14).

Like Isaiah He falls back on the will and determinate counsel of God. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight' (Mt. xi. 25). In that solemn utterance there is judgment as well as grace, grace in revealing the truth to babes, judgment in veiling it from the wise and prudent. The one is no more to be overlooked than the other. We may not express things in that way, but we recognize that consequences are inevitable, that there are natural laws which cannot be tampered with. The past cannot be undone, lost opportunities cannot be recalled, the unused talent is inevitably taken away. All this must be attributed in the last resort to the will of God,—not an arbitrary will overriding human responsibility, but that infinitely wise and holy will which gives to the universe its constitution, and ordains the consequences of human action.

III

The Peril of Hearing

All this accords ill with present-day popular pictures of Jesus. 'Writers seem to vie with each other in "humanizing" the picture, till we have inherited a conception perfectly expressed by the average illustrator of to-day; a figure that is mildness personified, below middle stature, with delicate features, hands and feet, the complete embodiment of the gentle dreamer.'[1] In harmony with this we have a companion picture of God as the embodiment of all that is most delightful and pleasing, a God who is, above everything else, *nice*. This one-sided view of things, this perversion of the gospel, has had a disastrous effect on many minds, creeping over them like a sleepy sickness, benumbing the moral feelings, and inducing a vain sense of carnal security. Nothing dreadful can ever happen. Christ is always at our beck and call. God can be depended on to make everybody comfortable in the end. The drama of the world is but a pretty fairy story in which we shall all live happy ever after!

It is time we had restored the balance, and

[1] B. S. Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels*, 159.

begun again to preach to men the gospel in all the solemnity of its fullness. 'This religion of illusion, this religion of sugar and spice and all things nice, must be fought as we fight the White Plague and the Black Death. . . . Facts are more important than any cherished mistaken beliefs, no matter how unpleasant the facts and how delightful the beliefs. This is not a nice world, and God is not a nice God. God is too awful and terrible, too destructive to our foolish little plans, to be nice. But God is a fact, and this world is made up of facts, and if we are ever to live securely and magnificently in this world (or any other) it can only be through adaptation to these facts.' [1]

There is a tradition that our Lord said on one occasion, 'He that is near Me is near the fire.' Whether this is an authentic saying of His or not, it agrees with much in the Gospels, where He repeatedly warns men to take heed how they approach Him and hear His words and deal with His claims. Men draw near to the fire to be warned, but if they are careless they may be burnt. The same idea is expressed by our Lord under the image of the corner-stone. It is laid for a foundation upon which a man may securely build his life; but it may become a stumbling-block and even an avalanche of destruction. 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

The lesson of it all is obvious. 'Take heed how ye hear.' The intention of the Divine Teacher is wholly gracious and saving. He condescends to speak in parables in order to bring heavenly truth down to the level of the meanest understanding. He makes the truth pictorial to catch the ear of the careless. He would fain drop a story into their minds like a living seed, which some day may germinate and grow to the harvest. Such is His hope. But He knows that it may be frustrated. The simple word may be despised, the good seed may perish, the parable may become a veil hiding the truth from careless eyes. Therefore must we seek for the truth as a man digs for hid treasure, we must stir ourselves up to lay hold on the word. We must not easily be daunted, but must earnestly search for the key which will unlock the treasuries of grace, that we may have access to the unsearchable riches of Christ. J. H. Morrison.

[1] H. N. Wieman, *The Wrestle of Religion with Truth*, 2 f.

Truth by Seeking

Mark iv. 22.—'For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.'

There is a close and interesting parallelism between these words of Mark's and one of the sayings of Jesus discovered in the rubbish mounds of Oxyrhynchus—'Jesus saith, "Everything that is not before thy face and that which is hidden from thee shall be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor buried which shall not be raised."' Some one hundred and twenty miles south of Cairo there flourished in Roman times one of the chief centres of early Christianity. Centuries ago, for some reason or other, the librarian of Oxyrhynchus, or some other, determined to make a clean sweep of papyrus accumulations, and sent them to be burned; but the bonfire did not do its work well, and perhaps a sand storm came on and covered up the heap. Who would have thought that after sixteen centuries these old documents would see the light and tell us that there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed nor buried which shall not be raised. As we think of this little scrap of worn papyrus we seem to hear a voice across the silence—'Seek and ye shall find.' [1]

Things are hidden that they may be the more abundantly revealed. The world is full of secrets that we may have the discipline of seeking for them and enjoy the keen delights of discovery. The human intellect needs the incentive of concealment to urge it to enquiry. No one is quite proof against the appeal of mystery, and all of us are apt to become strangely apathetic, once the mystery is solved. The most commonplace things become invested with romance, if only they are screened a little. A problem is enthralling, until you have solved it; a theme calls you forth to the quest and is not to be denied—until you have mastered it. The quest after knowledge is invariably more thrilling than the attainment of it. One dare venture to suggest that if men were born omniscient the human intellect would decay and die, and spiritual development would have no meaning. Can we not see, then, the wise purpose that hangs curtains about life, and

[1] H. D. Rawnsley, *Sayings of Jesus*, 2.

entices us to quest and questioning? Jesus asserted quite clearly that it was so. It is the Father's way of telling things by making secrets of them. They are hidden not to prevent us from getting at them but in order to help us to reach them.

¶ Lessing, the philosopher, once said: 'Did the Almighty, having in His right hand truth, and in His left search after truth, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility but without hesitation I should choose search after truth.' [1]

1. *Nature* is a great hiding-place. The choicest treasures are seldom found upon the surface. It is not on the surface that we find the jewels, but away down in the mine; it is not on the beach that we find the pearls, but down in the bed of the ocean. Stored-up energies are discovered only in earth's deepest depths. One cannot go into any chemist's laboratory or mechanic's workshop without the thought that God has ordained the mystery of our being, that by our constant quest for truth and for knowledge we might grow in grace and power and in patience and humility. Who would have supposed a few years ago that all our preconceived ideas of the reality of matter were to be questioned and the atomic theory to be restated? Or who would have thought that such a new element as the great illuminant 'radium' was lying hid in pitch-blende? And still the secrets of Nature are by no means exhausted. It is true to say that what we know of the world to-day is nothing to what we do not know. Those who know the most will say that at best they are like children picking up pebbles on the seashore. What we do not know is infinitely greater than what we do. There are concealed riches that we have not yet dreamed of, lying in the dark waiting for us to bring them to the light.

¶ As parents, who on Christmas Eve have filled their children's stockings, grow almost impatient if the child next morning spends too much time over the first thing he pulls out, and long to see him go farther in and get at the better things they have stowed away in the toe, so one can fancy God eagerly waiting through the ages to see His children bring out one and another good gift He has afore prepared for them. How delighted He must be when investigators happen on some device that will lessen the sufferings of the sick, or discover a principle that will enable men to distribute more justly earth's riches and make joy in wider commonalty shared, or arrange some contrivance to relieve laborious drudgery, or apply His spirit to some relations in life in which they had been acting selfishly before! [1]

History teaches us that the things which God has originally hidden have always been revealed at the right moment for the accomplishment of the highest purposes, not only material but moral. If the mysteries of the destructive powers of Nature for instance had flashed like a revelation upon an untutored age, what a curse it would have been! We look back and read the course of Divine government and we find that illumination has always kept step with moral progress.

2. As it is in Nature so it is in *Grace*. As we find that gold and silver are hidden, and earth's powers and energies, and life and heaven, we are not surprised that the Christ of God was surrounded by obscurity. Outside Palestine was the great and noisy world, with its culture, its literature, its markets, its marching armies, but it was in the Carpenter of Nazareth that was hidden all the wisdom of the Godhead bodily.

We see Him moving among men with no apparent interest in culture, in statesmanship, in countless areas of man's high development. As we look closer we are astonished to find in this Mind, so largely filled with the thoughts common to the men of His day, a wisdom that we never seem to overpass; a world Soul with limitless sympathies and unbounded purposes; a Spirit which seems native to every sphere of culture and human activity, so that we feel no violence in associating Him with art, with music, with science, and with everything true, lovely, and honourable, whether it came within His range of vision in His lifetime or not. But the mind, the soul, the spirit seem hidden in the first-century Jewish artisan. But why hidden? If the word, the light, the life, the love of God were to be communicated to men, how could God accomplish it more effectively than by compressing all into a human life? When the Word was made flesh, there was a hiding of God's power. We can be so occupied with the flesh that we see nothing through it.

[1] Kennedy Williamson, *The Uncarven Timbers*, 140.

[1] H. S. Coffin, *University Sermons*, 112.

But the hiding is really not to conceal but to manifest the eternal life, which is God's own life, the life of devotion to the great purpose of the Kingdom of love.

In our Lord's own teaching we find the truth hidden in parables, no doubt to awaken interest. Christians who take their Master seriously and try to think out what His teachings mean for them to-day are often disappointed. 'Why did Jesus not make what He expected of us entirely clear? How am I to know what as a Christian I am to do under these circumstances? How unsatisfactory to have a handful of picturesque stories, and a few sayings, like turning the other cheek, and letting your coat go with your cloak, and walking the second mile, and being salt, and light, and leaven.' Yes, but the Light of life, the solution of every perplexity is hid in these few words; and the answer to each question comes out when we need it and can employ it.

3. The fact that so much is hidden from immediate sight is also a loud call and incentive to faith. Where it is lacking or languishing life deteriorates, for the man who will walk only by sight cuts himself off from participation in what is by far the largest part of life's fullness.

'Ask,' 'Seek,' 'Knock,' comprise the Saviour's teaching regarding our attitude toward the things which are concealed, for God hides them as an encouragement to insistent inquiry. As a child is always curious concerning a secret when aware of its existence, so He would have us childlike in this respect, and by thus hiding Himself kindles in us the spirit of children. This is an age when men are largely unwilling to make much moral effort, and in consequence comparatively few really get to know God in such a manner as to transfigure their own lives and to help them towards the transformation of the lives of others. This is the explanation of the superficial character of much of our Christian life of to-day, and the powerless nature of much of our Christian faith.

The man to whom all this is real will be saved from the unlovely error of personal dogmatism. '*One* thing I know' is the utmost he can say, for he realizes that there is so much more of which he is ignorant, and which opens only to patient investigation and passionate search. He will recognize that others have dug more deeply into the mind of unsearchable riches than he has yet done, and this recognition will give him humility.

God's frank avowal that all is not yet revealed to us carries with it the certainty of full knowledge, and the assurance of a clear light in which every hidden thing shall be manifested. '*Then* shall we know' is the encouraging incentive which acts both as a spur and as a magnet to faith and love.[1]

God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell,
He hides them deep, as the secret sleep
Of him He loved so well.[2]

The Responsibility of Hearing

Mark iv. 24.—'Take heed what ye hear.'

If our Lord insists, as He does constantly, on the responsibility attached to our speaking, He is equally emphatic on the responsibility of hearing. Often when He was beginning a discourse, and sometimes when He was concluding one, He would pause a moment, and look round the company, and say, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' There was a sense in which all heard alike, for when Jesus spake He lifted up His voice. But there was another sense in which every man who listened heard something a little different from his neighbour, and Christ was intensely aware of that divergence. All were listening, yet not all were hearing. Christ knew it intuitively and sympathetically. He read it in the look upon their faces. And so do we learn that He who felt intensely the responsibility which clings to speaking felt, and often gave expression to, the responsibility which is attached to hearing.

1. There is, of course, a large and literal sense in which hearing is independent of the will. And our Saviour knew that perfectly, for He was always in living touch with fact. No man can choose entirely what he hears, any more than he can choose entirely what he sees. There is an element of necessity in life. It is the ground on which our liberty is built. Every day there are ten thousand sounds travelling

[1] J. S. Holden, *The Glory that Conceals*, 36.
[2] Mrs Alexander.

towards us in unseen vibration, and just because God has made the ear to hear we hear them whether we will or no. He whose lot is cast in the great city cannot be deaf to the uproar of the street. He whose home is by the sea-shore cannot escape the music of the sea. In the physical impact of all sound there is a region where the will is powerless, and Jesus was perfectly aware of that. The point is that, when Jesus spoke of hearing, it was not of the physical impact that He thought. For Him no sound had travelled all its course till it had reached the soul. And it is when the soul, in its inherent liberty, passes its inevitable verdict that the thing we hear becomes a moral thing, carrying an infinite significance. To different ears come the same words, identical in cadence and in syllable, and yet how diverse their interpretation in the selective power of the soul. It is not really by the eye we see. It is really by the soul we see. And it is not by the ear we hear. It is indeed by the character we hear. By all we love, by all we have made ourselves, by all we have striven for or lusted after, do we take the words which fall on every ear and colour them with heaven or with hell. Take heed *what* you hear. It is a revelation of the personality. It is in the verdicts which we are always passing that our responsibility begins.

> In ourselves the sunshine dwells:
> In ourselves the music swells.
> Everywhere the heart awake
> Finds what music it can make.
> Everywhere the light and shade
> By the gazer's eye is made.

(1) One might illustrate that in many ways. We might think, for instance, of *the home*. We might think of those childish stammerings of speech that succeed the 'only language' of a cry. Those broken syllables, those childish lispings, those faint irrecognizable resemblances —how little of any value these convey to the indifferent or uninterested heart. But to the mother they are full of meaning, and she is never weary of listening to them. She does not hear them with a fleshly ear. She hears them with a mother's heart. She brings that gift of heaven, a mother's love, to the interpreting of every syllable. And so by what she hears she trains her child; yet in so doing she reveals herself, and stands before us self-confessed in motherhood. Love a person, and his speech is sweet. Hate him, and his every word is barbed. It is by love and hate and jealousy and envy that we record and register the utterance. And so it is always vital to self-knowledge to take heed not only to what we say, but also to what we hear.

(2) That strange divergence of the recording faculty has in our modern life one notable expression. It is the bane, perhaps it is the necessity, of the development of *party-politics*. No sphere in modern life more powerfully or constantly exemplifies that there is no such thing in the affairs of men as what may be called neutrality of hearing. Some great statesman makes a speech, and the news of it is flashed along the wires. And on the morrow in a hundred newspapers it stands precisely as it was delivered. To one man it is the voice of an angel and thrilling as with the music of a trumpet; to another hearing the same words it is sound and fury signifying nothing. Nothing is registered on a clean slate. There is no such thing in life as a clean slate. Nothing falls upon a virgin ear. There is no such gateway to the soul. Men hear by every ideal that they cherish, by every battle they have lost or won, by every ancient privilege they guard, by every dream that they have ever dreamed.

¶ For many years I have professed to be a moral philosopher. As a moral philosopher I am bound, as other men are not, to analyse character, and, so far as I can, show it in the making. Above all I am committed to the thinking that is *reflective* in character, to what Carlyle would call 'unwholesome self-scrutiny'; and I am bound to put opinions and beliefs, unconsciously and uncritically adopted, to rigorous tests. Does the reader believe that, in doing so, I am able to free myself of the elements introduced into my very being when I was a growing boy and youth in that quiet little village? I myself am under no such delusion. I can hardly help taking my stand at the side of the working-man, or, if I think him wrong, being generous in my excuses for him. The memory of my father comes up when I try to measure the value of the services and the pay of the workers. But my sympathy for the employer and capitalist is always slow to flow; and I find myself wondering what *their* wages would be were they paid according to the

value of their social services. Day by day I find new evidence that to be fair all round is beyond my power.[1]

(3) The same thing is always happening in the hearing of *the gospel message.* A hearer's judgment of a gospel sermon is really the judgment of himself. It is the same message that falls on every ear, and yet how different is the response! All that is living in the hearer's breast rises up to meet a living message, and rises in welcome or defiance. Men hear with all that they have made themselves. They hear with every sin that they are clinging to. Every ambition, every joy or sorrow, comes to the hearing of a gospel sermon. And that is why to one it is weariness, and to another a thing to be disproved, and to a third, in hungriness of heart, the very bread of angels. It is a great responsibility to preach. It is a great responsibility to hear.

¶ Dr Whyte, of Edinburgh, tells how one morning he met a lady who said to him, 'I did not like your sermon on Sunday.' She did not know that the same week her son wrote to the great preacher and said, 'That sermon led me to Christ.'

¶ A distinguished Judge, speaking at a private meeting in connection with a great denominational Assembly, made the sweeping assertion that in all his long experience he had never listened to a bad sermon. The statement was received at the moment with incredulous smiles, but the speaker went on to justify it. 'He had never listened,' he said, 'to any man who tried to set forth the truth of God without deep sympathy with the preacher's aim and without surrounding him with such an atmosphere of help and encouragement as his own prayers were fit to secure.' The explanation, offered with obvious sincerity, created a deep impression.

2. There is another familiar fact which helps to illustrate the text. It is the fact that in the company of certain people there are things that we should never dream of saying. There are people in whose presence the most indecent tongue never feels one vestige of restraint. There are other people in whose hearing one would not venture on an unseemly word. And all that, to the observant mind, indicates that the kind of thing we hear depends in no small measure on the character. To a large extent in our daily life we *are* responsible for what we hear. There are numerous occasions every day when a man is largely to blame for what is told him. He has invited it by his own habits: by all the impress he has made on others. Had he been living a more worthy life his character would have commanded silence. It should be our great desire that men may honour us with worthy speech. And when they do the opposite let us look inward, and find what must be amiss in us, when men whose words are dishonouring to God venture to trade upon a fellow-feeling. There is no refuge in silence for a Christian. Silence may only indicate consent. There is no refuge from the strife of tongues save in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. For in His presence all that is evil dies, and gossip and indecency are silent, and something stirs men to say out their worthiest, as conscious of a heart that understands.

[1] Sir Henry Jones, *Old Memories*, 48.

Spontaneous Growth

Mark iv. 26-29.—'And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.'

In the eyes of our Lord the Kingdom of Nature was one great miracle of the Kingdom of Grace, and the means by which in the providence of God man was provided with food for the body told also of the means by which human lives came to their spiritual harvest. The sower is in alliance with the silent, cryptic forces of life. He casts in the seed, and by and bye he gathers the harvest; but in the meantime he trusts that which no man has ever explained—the mystery of life. Behind all his effort there lies that which he cannot do, and cannot even understand. He knows enough to teach him a quiet hope through many signless days. He is wise enough to read the meaning of the first faint film of green softly drawn over the brown earth. He moves with hope and confidence in his kingdom because, having done his small but essential duty, he knows how vast and sure are those silent forces with which that duty has linked him. So, said the Master, is it with the Kingdom of God.[1]

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Silences of Jesus*, 86.

1. As our Lord compares the Kingdom to a corn of wheat which is cast into the ground, we will see how that seed grows.

(1) In the first place, it does grow. Its nature is to grow; and though bad weather may keep it back for a while, it will grow if it gets into the soil, and that silently and steadily. The farmer sleeps, and does his day's work, and sleeps again; but the seed is growing all the while. How it grows he cannot tell, for life is a mystery, and science has not found out the secret even of a grass like that.

The seed is not foreign to the soil, it is akin to it: the one is preordained, preadapted, to the other. Till the seed is planted it is a mere inert possibility; even if it germinates it can come to nothing. Till it receives the seed the soil, too, is, for purposes of growth, nothing better than a possibility: its forces lie dormant, its potencies are hidden, they cannot assert themselves. But bring the two together, under proper conditions, and with due preparation, and a miracle takes place—as true a miracle as though one should rise from the grave. The dead earth lives; the sleeping seed quickens; the two react on each other, because they are made for each other, and need each other, and cannot come to anything except in twinship with each other; and behold, in due time the golden grain 'full in the ear.'

(2) In the next place, the order of growth is fixed. Everything in its own time and order. The seed is buried in the earth, and who knows whether it will survive or not? Gradually, however, the first green shoot makes its way through the hindering soil; then the ear, and then the full grain. Unhurried yet certain, the hidden vitality evolves through its full round of development.

(3) Then, again, the seed grows by taking into itself particles of matter. It feeds on the earth below, and drinks the water of the rain of heaven from above; and without that water it could take up nothing from the soil. Earth and heaven join to feed it; but the power of life which turns the soil and the rain into leaves and stem and fruit baffles all our efforts to discover it.

(4) There is yet another point, which our Lord does not mention here, though He does elsewhere. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And St Paul: 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die': and then he reminds us that what rises from the earth is not the seed we sow, but a plant whose glory we could not have discovered from the seed. Such a body God hath given it, according to its kind.

> First the grain, and then the blade—
> The one destroyed, the other made;
> Then stalk and blossom, and again
> The gold of newly minted grain.

2. To this growth our Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us trace the growth, then, of the Kingdom in the world.

(1) First, it does grow. It is like the flowing tide: a wave or two may not tell you much, but presently you will see it washing higher up the rocks. If the world is far enough yet from being genuinely Christian, it has without question grown more so from age to age. There is more good in it now, and generally good of a higher tone and with a greater influence.

¶ Immense as have been the strides in every department in the last hundred years, nowhere have they been so long as in the moral sphere. Eager spirits always grow impatient; yet appeal, as Emerson advises, from the verdict of the years to that of the centuries, even the decades, and you will see that never has God been more visibly at work within His world. A hundred years ago, in these great days to which we all look back so wistfully, slaves were being bought and sold within our empire: who would stand it now? Only some eighty years back in these wonderful times—would they were here again, cry many eager voices—did they not drive poor little souls to long hours of hard drudgery while still mere infants, nobody protesting, though now our degenerate hearts burst into hot flames of clean anger at the very thought of it? A century since or so, they spoke of sharing our Lord with the heathen, and the world rocked with laughter at so crazy a scheme, with the Church joining loudly in the merriment. Yet to-day, who laughs now? [1]

> Say not, the struggle nought availeth;
> The labour and the wounds are vain,
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been, they remain;

[1] A. J. Gossip.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

(2) Then, again, it grows in order; first the commands of a law, then the freedom of a gospel; first crude religious ideas, then the wider and worthier thoughts we learn by comparing texts with each other, with the general drift of Scripture, and with God's other words in science and history, in life and conscience.

(3) Again, the Kingdom grows silently, like the corn. It comes not in the noise of war and strife, as if the wrath of man could work the righteousness of God; nor in the debates of parliaments and Church councils, in the drawing up of laws and creeds and ordering of rites and ceremonies, as if it were a work of human wisdom. It comes—it is ever coming—whenever God gives us a loftier view of truth, a worthier idea of duty, a nobler work of service to our fellow-men. It comes, but no man knoweth how it comes, for life is always a mystery.

(4) And again, it grows like the corn by feeding on things of the earth. It is the Kingdom, not the visible Church, which takes into itself the kingdoms of men, their laws and societies, and grows by transforming them: yet it would have no power to transform them if it were not also drinking water of that rain of heaven which makes the wilderness of sin to rejoice, and its desert places to flourish like the garden of the Lord.

3. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Again, the Kingdom of God in our own hearts is like the corn.

(1) It grows. Its nature is to grow, and grow it will in every good and faithful heart. But all things in order, like the corn. The warfare of life must come before the crown of victory, the bitterness of repentance before the joys of love Divine, the childlike enthusiasms of the new believer before the graces of the ripened man of God. Our Leader learned obedience from the things He suffered, and we must let patience have her perfect work before we can enter into the royal rest of God.

¶ 'Nothing great,' says Epictetus, 'is produced suddenly, not even a grape or a fig. If you say to me that you want a grape or a fig *now*, I will answer you that you cannot have it; a grape takes time. Let it flower first, then it will put forth its fruit, and then ripen. And would you have the fruit of a man's life and character all in a moment? Do not expect it.'

O that I may grow!
I see the leaves out-pushing hour by hour,
With steady joy the buds burst out aflower,
Urged gladly on by Nature's waking power.
O that I may grow.

O that I may grow!
What though Time cuts his furrows in my face,
My heart may ever add grace unto grace,
Graces with added days still keeping pace.
O that I may grow.

(2) Again, the Kingdom grows in silence. It comes not in the heroic moments of life, but in the weary times of patient work and waiting; not in the rioting of spiritual excess, but in the quiet round of common duties, for these are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased. We sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed grows up, we know not how. The unbidden thoughts of good which stir our hearts come to us like strangers from another world. The life within us is no conquest of our own, but the gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. How it grows is more than we know: all that we can do is to cherish it with reverent and loving care.

¶ 'When I was at Lincoln,' says Dr J. D. Jones, 'I preached a sermon on "Friendship." It was addressed especially to young men. I remember feeling particularly discouraged after preaching that day. I kept company with Elijah under the juniper-tree, and felt I had laboured for naught and in vain. But since coming to Bournemouth I received a letter from Australia about that very sermon. And this was what it said. The writer was in Lincoln the Sunday I preached it. He was a complete stranger, and quite casually, or rather shall we say providentially? he turned into my old church. He went out to Australia immediately afterwards, and lived rather a rough and careless life; but the sermon he heard at Lincoln clung to him. In his wildest days he

said he kept hearing the appeal to make a Friend of Him who sticketh closer than a brother. And at last, six years after the sermon was preached, he gave himself body and soul to the Lord.'

(3) Yet again, the Kingdom grows by taking up the things of earth—our relations and friends, our business and amusements, and the hopes and fears, and cares and joys that come from them. The richer our earthly life in these things, the richer the material for our heavenly life to feed upon.

> All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs our mortal frame;
> They are but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame.

If this is true of the earthly love which springs from the earth and looks up to heaven, still truer is it of the love Divine which comes down to us from heaven. On the things of earth the life of heaven feeds; and it can no more do without them than the seed can do without the soil. Such an escape from them as the monk dreams of would only be into a region where goodness is impossible. Yet neither can we transform the things of earth unless we drink the water of the rain of heaven—that rain which cometh down out of heaven to become in us a spring of water leaping up to life eternal.

Through death unto life is the law of the spiritual world as well as of the natural. So Jesus cast Himself into the rough furrows of our little earth. The blade even now is visible, by and bye shall be the harvest song.

¶ Who shall measure the fruitfulness of that one death? It is the source of all true thought, of all holy feeling, of all noble action, of all the heavenly graces of the Spirit. We see but the beginning of what it is designed to bear. The day alone will declare it, that day when Jesus will appear at the head of the whole family of God, saying, 'Behold I and the children which God has given me.'[1]

[1] Fergus Ferguson.

The Expansion of the Kingdom

Mark iv. 30-32.—'And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth; but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.'

This is a parable of encouragement and good hope. There had been in the Parable of the Sower a great deal to discourage and depress. It seemed to suggest that, of the seed sown in men's hearts, three parts would be lost. And, according to Matthew's account, the Parable of the Sower had been followed by a more discouraging parable still—the Parable of the Tares. In addition to the perversity of the human heart, our Lord told His disciples that they had to reckon with an adversary who was just as tireless sowing the seeds of noxious weeds as they were in sowing the good seed of the Kingdom. Between the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Tares we can well believe the disciples were sorely discouraged and depressed. And so our Lord followed up those two parables about the difficulties and discouragements of Christian work, with these two about the encouragements and glorious results of it. First, the parable of the fruit-bearing earth, and the seed growing secretly. And secondly, this parable of the mustard-seed, which from tiny beginnings developed and grew until it became greater than all the herbs in the garden, and almost attained to the dimensions of a tree.

Some people have felt that the grown mustard herb was too insignificant a figure to describe the majestic growth of the Kingdom. The great oak or the cedar of Lebanon, they feel, would have been a more fitting simile. But it is not so much the majesty of the Kingdom that Christ is emphasizing here as the contrast between beginnings and endings, the difference between the seed and the product. And while the difference between the acorn and the oak is conspicuous enough, the difference between the mustard-seed and the mustard herb is more striking still. For in the East, according to the testimony of travellers, the mustard will grow till it overtops a man on horseback. And

that is the truth Christ wishes to drive home—great results may follow from tiny beginnings.

1. The beginnings of the Kingdom were small and insignificant indeed. Think of Jesus Christ Himself—since, as Archbishop Trench says, He Himself is really the Mustard-seed, for from Him all subsequent developments of Church and Kingdom have issued. What could be lowlier, humbler, more insignificant, judged by men's ordinary standards, than the career of Jesus? Growing up in a distant and despised province; working in His town as an ordinary carpenter, He did not till His thirtieth year emerge from the bosom of His family. Then for two or three years He preached and taught in the neighbouring towns and villages, with occasional visits to Jerusalem; gathered about Him a small band of disciples, for the most part fisherfolk; and at length, falling into the hands of His enemies, with no resistance on His part or on that of His followers, died a malefactor's death upon the Cross. What could have been more insignificant? The life and death of Jesus scarcely made a ripple in the life of the great world. The insignificance and humbleness of the whole movement which Christ initiated were, indeed, cast up as a reproach against Him. 'Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?' was the taunt flung at Him by unbelieving Jews. Here Christ quite freely and frankly admits that insignificance. There was nothing striking or obviously great about the Kingdom, as represented in Himself and His tiny band of disciples. It was like a grain of mustard-seed.[1]

Yet Jesus was sure it would survive and grow. Small as it was in its beginnings, the Kingdom was of the nature of a seed. It had a vital force in it that nothing could kill, a germinating and expansive power which would only be quickened by opposition. His own death, the obscurity and limitation to which His cause was at first subjected, were not, He knew, the first symptoms of permanent oblivion, but were only the sowing of the seed. He was no more anxious than the farmer is who, for the first week or two, sees no appearance of his plants above ground. Our Lord knew that, could He only get His Kingdom accepted at even one small point of earth, the growth would inevitably and in good time follow.[1]

2. Has not our Lord's prophecy come true? The Kingdom which began with Jesus and His handful of Galilean disciples is now the mightiest force in the world. It has spread into every land. It numbers its subjects by the million. It differs from every earthly kingdom. They often make a great beginning, but come to a miserable and shameful end. Christ's Kingdom came without observation, but it is advancing by steady and persistent growth to its glorious consummation. The mustard-seed has become greater than all herbs. That is always the way with the Kingdom of God. Its beginning is always insignificant, but none can compute its results.

The parable interprets to the Church not only its general course in history, but the mode of its successive revivals. They have always, like the mustard-tree, grown from small beginnings. The history of the first group in the upper-chamber at Jerusalem has been repeated over and over again: a few devoted men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have been the seed of great and surprising developments. Think of the little band of monks who landed with Augustine on the shores of Thanet; of St Columba and his handful of followers who rested their weary oars at Iona; of St Francis and his first few 'poor brothers'; of Charles and John Wesley, with their fellow-students following their 'method' of life at Oxford; and remember what great developments grew from such small beginnings. They were known to the providence of God, but scarcely imagined or imaginable by men when the seed was sown.[2]

¶ A little over a hundred years ago William Carey's soul was filled with concern about the heathen. He was a man of no great position and of little influence. Even his brother ministers pooh-poohed William Carey and his notion of converting the heathen. The Kingdom of God was like a grain of mustard-seed. But from that passion in William Carey's heart the whole modern mission enterprise has sprung. The Northampton cobbler poring over his map of the world—that is the grain of mustard-seed. The noble army of missionaries who have gone

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, i.-vi. 6, 159.

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Parables of our Lord*, i. 55.
[2] C. G. Lang, *The Parables of Jesus*, 50.

forth to plant in every land the banner of the Cross, the immense and incalculable work of missions in wellnigh every quarter of the globe, that is the great tree.[1]

(1) 'And shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.' The prime business of the Church is to witness to the Unseen, the Spiritual; religion is its central concern. But the Church has continually put forth branches from the main stem: in addition to its purely religious function, the Church has started and still maintains all manner of philanthropic and social agencies. Very early it began to care for the sick, the poor, and the orphan. A little later it made the education of the child its charge. To-day it is providing for the pure and healthy recreation of our young people in the large cities. Our hospitals and infirmaries; our orphanages and homes; our institutions and schools; our Young People's Clubs and Y.M.C.A.'s are just branches. All kinds of ameliorative and redemptive agencies owe their very existence to the Christian Church. As it has grown it has put forth 'great branches.'

¶ Near the entrance in the corridor of Johns Hopkins Hospital, in the city of Baltimore, stands a gigantic figure of the Christ in marble. There is a look of tender sympathy even in the face of stone. The arms are extended and the hands outspread as if welcoming the multitudes. On the base of the pedestal are inscribed His own words, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' When I first saw this statue of the Christ I wondered why it was placed there—the first thing that one would see upon crossing the threshold of the hospital. Later, when I came to know some of the eminent physicians and surgeons and the nurses who cared for the suffering with tender skill, my wonder was answered. I found in this home of healing the rich from far, and the poor from the near-by streets and alleys, all alike treated with the same skill and devotion. Without respect to wealth or race or position, every physician and nurse was answering with self-forgetful devotion the call to human need. It was the spirit of Jesus reincarnate throughout the great hospital.[2]

(2) 'So that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.' Does not that suggest to us the Kingdom, the Church of God, as a place of rest? You remember that prophecy in Ezekiel about the tender twig which the Lord shall plant; it shall bring forth boughs, said the prophet, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar, and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing. 'In the shadow of the branches thereof they shall dwell.' Our Lord thought of His Church as a shelter and rest, and such a shelter the Church has been. The records of the past show that the Church has been the great bulwark against tyranny and oppression, and that quite literally the poor and friendless fled to it for protection. But in a still deeper sense the Church is a shelter to men. It is a shelter to the man who is oppressed and harassed by temptation. Men and women, sorely tried, are strengthened for duty by communion with God and the fellowship of His people. It is a shelter to men who are pursued by their sins. 'Come unto me,' says Jesus, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Rest and perfect satisfaction; and we can see men coming from every part of the world seeking it. 'Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?' They are the many children of men seeking rest in the shadow of the tree.

When rising winds and rain descending,
A near approaching storm declare,
With trembling speed their wings extending,
The birds to sheltering trees repair.

So I, by faith, with sin oppressed,
Would *refuge* taste, O Christ, in Thee;
Thou art my hiding-place and rest:
From every evil shelter me.[1]

At Eventide

Mark iv. 35.—'When the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.'

Dr Rendel Harris has said that 'to look out to a sea, or to look across one, may be of itself an oracle of the Kingdom.' Even Southampton Water turned to gospel when Isaac Watts looked across it, and began to sing to himself

[1] J. D. Jones.
[2] G. R. Grose, *The New Soul in China.*

[1] From the German.

and for the whole family on earth of 'sweet fields beyond the swelling flood.' And it is in that imaginative sense that we are to use these words.

1. *The Other Side.*—Our immediate concern, whilst we are here, is with this side, and yet it is a strangely stolid nature which never indulges a question as to what may lie upon the other. Such speculations and inquiries had their beginning at the very origins of human life, but as civilization has advanced the thought of the future has become more and not less influential. When Peter bids his fellows 'Love one another from the heart fervently,' he adds the reason that they were 'begotten not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible,' for he felt that a level of relations which might befit a race of *ephemeridæ* would be quite unworthy of immortals. It would be wasteful to expend any treasure of affection on creatures with whom we meet and clash in some momentary conjunction, and then fall apart; but our companionship, says Peter, is for always.

¶ 'There is not room for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom in such a nook of life as this,' says Cowper to Lady Hesketh, 'therefore I am, and must and will be, *Yours for ever,* William Cowper.'

It may be said that every part of our life and every duty should be affected by the thoughts we cherish of 'the other side.' Ruskin protested that he could not argue about war until he knew how men judged of immortality: was he to 'assume that a discharge of artillery would merely knead down a certain quantity of once living clay, or that out of every portion of the ruinous heap there went some astonished soul, unwillingly released?' The same thought should rule men in their relations of buying and selling, as all conceptions of what is profit and what is loss are at once transformed if we believe that beyond the immediate and superficial accounting there awaits us a more tremendous and a final review. If we have only a few years to dispose of we are justified by prudence in refusing adventures and in dismissing hopes too bold for dying men to cling to. Like ancient shipmen we should cautiously make our way from headland to headland, keeping close to the things we see. But if a greater life is ours, we need not fear to launch out into the deep, engaging in tasks in which we are bound to fail, and cherishing hopes which cannot possibly be satisfied within the narrow bounds of earth and time.

After ages of inquiry this is still an 'undiscovered country'; we cannot even guess with any sureness at what it gives to those who reach it, and yet continually our minds run out in that direction. We watch a good man's life and note how everything that has come in experience seems to abide with him in character: sorrow and gladness, work and disappointment and success, love and pain alike have made their mark upon his nature. But when he has reached his point and is an instrument, as we feel, fit for every noble use, his life abruptly ends. Has God no reasonable economies? or does He make only, in a whim, to destroy and throw away?

A hundred instances occur to us, and our hearts appeal for a world in which work and character and devotion may find their full expansion. People who have little conscious poetry or piety in them crave for some evidence of a life with unhappiness and defeat excluded, and with the familiar faces gathered round. Creatures of a loftier make are fretted often by the limitations of their knowledge. 'We know bit by bit,' says Paul; 'we only see the baffling reflections in a mirror.' Our apprehension of the truth is, at the best, cloudy and obscure, for the faculties we employ are all imperfect, and we fain would know indeed.

How long, great God, how long must I
Immured in this dark prison lie:
Where at the grates and avenues of sense
My soul must wait to have intelligence:
Where but faint gleams of Thee salute my sight,
Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night:
When shall I leave this magic sphere,
And be all mind, all eye, all ear?

Such thoughts about 'the other side' would work for mischief if they led to any slackening of effort in our daily tasks; but even very busy people send out hasty flights and glances of desire, affirming, if only for a moment, their citizenship in the enduring Kingdom of God; and their labour is better done for such imaginings, as a tired man works the faster when he remembers the welcome which awaits him at his home.

2. *The Evening.*—It is natural in certain moods to think peevishly of old age on the side of its privations—'sans eyes, sans teeth, sans taste, sans everything.' That is old age without dignity and without hope, but it is not so that Jesus would have His friends regard it. 'My outward man,' says Paul, 'is decaying, but my inward man is renewed day by day.' Certainly there is less of energy, and some of the former avenues of delight are blocked; but that only means that life is being prudently contracted with a view to fresh expansions. The evening is at hand, and the labourer is going home. Jesus opens the eyes of His friends to the surpassing interest and variety of God's world, unwilling that any of them should miss the goodness of it. And yet, although enjoying life to the last, a man who knows his Lord will not too anxiously hold on to it; it gives him much but not everything, and whilst delighting in what he has, he awaits from God the arrival of something greatly better. When all has been said in its praise it still is true that the world has for years been fastening a burden on his shoulders and taking the light out of his eye, so he is ready to welcome that Divine alchemy by which he will be made young again. Those who are not ready for the change may indulge some qualms; but the end may seem as natural as for a tired man to fall asleep when he wishes to be alert and fit for the calls of the coming day.

3. *The Companion.*—Jesus said, Let us go over—you and Me, travelling together. There may be storms to encounter on the water, with darkness and intolerable fears and the seeming risk of shipwreck; but if He who stilled the tempest is our Comrade, such fears are nought.

For both young and old there are moods in which, without the sense of companionship, life itself is hardly to be borne. George Macdonald admits that sometimes for him it would have been dreadful even to fall asleep but for the assurance of Someone greater than himself watching by him. And the same faith in a Companion and Protector should be the charter of the dying, enabling them to lie down with mind untroubled. 'My flesh shall rest in confidence,' says a Hebrew poet, 'for thou wilt not suffer one whom thou lovest to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path that leads to life.'

¶ The old Lord Manchester, in his wonderful book on *Death and Immortality*, has said, 'When sickness undresses a man for death then Job's *scio* ("I know that my Redeemer liveth") and Paul's *cupio* ("I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ") are the words of sweetest comfort.'

Any one who has cultivated a friendship with Jesus Christ, taking Him into his interests and his business as well as into his affections, will find a special promise in that friendship. It still may be the undiscovered country, but, at least, it is inhabited by one controlling Figure, who by His presence delivers it from any sense of foreignness. Whatever is uncertain in that life, He Himself is most certain, and He is the light of it. He who has borne us company on earth, making hard days possible, will meet us yonder; and even in the burden of the passage He will bear us through, for He has 'the keys of the Unseen World and of Death.' Death is like birth: at birth, the new frail life arrives to those who wait, out of the unknown, and at death we see a life departing into the unknown; but surely it also arrives—not unwelcome and not unawaited. The Face which has gladdened and reproved and consoled us here will meet us yonder, when we have struggled through the narrow gates of life.

¶ 'Doth not death fright you?' demands Bosola, the villain in John Webster's play.[1] And the woman answers, looking it in the face:

> Who would be afraid on 't,
> Knowing to meet such excellent company
> In the other world.

The Other Little Ships

Mark iv. 36.—'And there were also with him other little ships.'

Our attention, as we read the story of the stilling of the storm, is given to the ship in which Christ and the disciples were. We do not notice that there were also with Him other little ships. But it is worth noticing. For if they suffered from the storm, they also got the benefit of the 'great calm.' And they never knew how it came to pass. They were out on the Sea of Galilee, along with the ship in which

[1] *The Duchess of Malfi.*

were Christ and the disciples. When the storm came down so violently, they too were tossed by the waves and in danger of being swamped. And then when He said, 'Peace, be still,' and there was a great calm, they enjoyed the benefit of the calm.

1. This suggests the thought that God's blessings have a way of overflowing. It is not enough that He should deliver the boat which contains the disciples. At the same time, with the surplus of His bounty, He will save the other little ships as well. Even in material things it is difficult to draw the line and say, Here the blessing ends. When an Admiralty order comes to the Clyde, it is not only the firm that builds the ship which reaps the benefit. Many small tradesmen and humble housekeepers know better times, who have nothing whatever to do with shipbuilding. But in higher levels the feature becomes much more visible. Think of the preachers, the poets, the prophets of the Unseen who have most blessed and helped us. It was God who gave them these gifts; but we and many others have been enriched because God was good to them. That indeed is the only real sort of Election. There is no question that 'God elects some.' But never merely for themselves. Always with His eye on others to be blessed through them. We say that God elected Israel, as indeed He did. But not for Israel's own sake merely. Even we in this year of grace are like little ships in the neighbourhood of that ark, for we are still seeing God in these Hebrew Scriptures, and praising Him in Israel's Psalms. His blessing has overflowed.

That is why it need not perplex us to find, outside the Church and the profession of religion altogether, occasional beautiful characters and noble lives. It is in line with God's law in other spheres that the world should be enriched and sanctified with the overflow of His favour to those who are called by His Name. That is merely another instance of Grace which has broken bounds. These are some of the other little ships, sharing, though they know it not, in the disciples' blessing.

2. Now change the point of view a little. When those in the disciples' boat awoke to a sense of their danger, and, through the presence of Christ, saved themselves from shipwreck, they had done more than they knew. They had saved the other little ships also. They were, indeed, responsible for those others as well as for themselves.

That is a fact which runs through the whole of life. Every man, however obscure, has his following; but it is specially worth the Christian man's while to remember that there are with him other little ships. 'For their sakes,' said Jesus once, 'I sanctify myself.' Whether we realize it or not, there is always this vicarious element in all Christian living. Growl and grumble, and you make life harder for others about you. Face it with a quiet trust in God, in the faith and fellowship of Jesus, and you call out a similar faith on all sides of you. However poor we esteem our influence, it is a fact that there are those who are taking their notions of Christian living from us, whose ideals will tumble as we lower ours. What, after all, is the Christian life but 'having Christ on board our boat'? And when that is so, then, both in Galilee and in our own town, both in storm and in calm, something comes, something of blessing and helpfulness ought to come, to the little ships alongside. For that is a responsibility of which no disciple of Jesus Christ can ever possibly divest himself.

¶ 'Brother,' Francis said one day to one of the young monks at the Portiuncula, 'let us go down to the town and preach!' The novice, delighted at being signalled out to be the companion of Francis, obeyed with alacrity. They passed through the principal streets; turned down many of the by-ways and alleys; made their way out to some of the suburbs; and at length returned, by a circuitous route, to the monastery gate. As they approached it, the younger man reminded Francis of his original intention.

'You have forgotten, Father,' he said, 'that we went down to the town *to preach*!'

'My son,' Francis replied, 'we *have* preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen by many; our behaviour has been closely watched; it was thus that we preached our morning sermon. It is of no use, my son, to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk.'[1]

3. Change the point of view again. It was in answer to the prayer of the disciples that

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Crystal Pointers*, 19.

deliverance came also to those in the other little ships. They were saved by faith, but not by their own faith. They were blessed in answer to prayer, but it was not their own prayer.

Tennyson says :—

> More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of.

And the wonder of it is that the things which are wrought by prayer are often wrought on those who have not themselves prayed, and they may never know how their blessings came to them. Have we been rescued out of keen temptations? Have we been able to do some things for God, and to stand? Have we sometimes felt the peace of God which passeth understanding keep our heart and mind? We believe that it was in answer to prayer. But whose prayer? Not our own. A mother's prayer, perhaps. We cannot always tell. In all prayer there is mystery. But the mystery centres in intercessory prayer. That we should be blessed because of some other's prayer of faith; that our prayer of faith should be able to bless others—that is the mystery. But the examples of it are undeniable.

> The weary ones had rest, the sick had joy that day
> And wondered how—
> The ploughman singing at his work had prayed :
> 'God help them now.'
>
> Alone in foreign lands, they wondered how
> Their feeble words had power—
> At home the Christians, two or three had met
> To pray an hour.
>
> So we are always wondering, wondering long,
> Because we do not see
> Some one, unknown, perhaps, and far away,
> On bended knee.

Four men carried a paralytic into the presence of Jesus, and when Jesus saw *their* faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.' A woman came out of the Syrophœnician country and cried, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' He answered and said unto her, 'O woman, great is *thy* faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.'

This is a kind of prayer—it is the highest kind, indeed—about which the natural man is rather incredulous, and even devout people are sometimes not very sure. But the curious thing is that in these days of ours, confirmation and support for it are coming from quite an unexpected quarter. For psychic investigation, which seems to be giving us glimpses into other mysteries, is at present teaching us the reasonableness and the value of this very form of prayer. We are being told to-day by the youngest of the sciences that you really do a great deal for a man when you send out to him, like wireless messages, your hopes and desires and prayers to God for his welfare. We now know at least quite certainly that we cannot measure, and we must not talk as if we could measure, the spirit forces that stream out in beneficent radiations from the heart of a praying man or woman.

¶ Once at the front a man, outwardly of small religion, said to me, 'Why do you think it is that sometimes under heavy shelling, my nerves all atwitter, suddenly and unaccountably I become calm and unafraid, ready to face anything?' And I replied, 'May it not be that somebody is praying for you?' Whereat he stood still, pondering a moment with a queer light dawning on his face, and then rapped out an oath, 'By God, padre,' he cried, 'you are right; it will be my mother.'[1]

From all this, Christian people can at any rate take fresh courage to believe that they can really further the causes and help the friends they love by their prayers for them. Our usefulness is greater than we realize. We are our brother's keeper in a wider sense than we think. If his heart is hard and his eyes holden and we have pleaded with him in vain, can we not consider our responsibility at an end? Must it not be unto him according to his faith or want of faith at the last? No, we have touched a deeper truth than that to-day; it may be unto him yet according to *our* prayer and *our* faith.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 42.

The Sleep of Christ

Mark iv. 38.—'And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?'

Mark makes a special point of the day on which this incident took place. It was, he says, on 'that day,' that is, on the day on which Jesus had preached these wonderful parables, and several more besides, as we know from St Matthew's account. Apparently He had been preaching all the day long. It may have been one of those days when the multitude pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, and He had not leisure so much as to eat. Anyhow, from morning till night He had been busy at His holy work; and it was not till even was come that He suggested to His disciples that they should go over to the quiet and lonely shores on the other side of the lake.

A day's preaching in the hot and stifling atmosphere of the Galilean Sea must, however, imply a tremendous strain. But the physical strain was not all; preaching was, with our Lord, no cheap and easy business. Indeed it is not an easy business to any preacher worth the name. To be an ambassador for Christ, beseeching men on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God—this is no light or unimportant task. There is no work so burdensome, so toilsome, so exacting, so costly, as that of the true preacher. It puts a strain, not upon body and mind simply, but upon heart and spirit as well. And of all preachers Jesus realized most vividly what preaching meant. His heart went out in a perfect passion of pity to the crowd to whom He spoke.

> Oh, to save these—to perish for their saving,
> Die for their life, be offered for them all.

There was entreaty, there was desire, there was agony in the preaching of Jesus, and it left Him utterly exhausted and spent.

How all this comes out in the narrative before us! It was the disciples who had to dismiss the crowd, and then they took Him, even as He was, and set sail for the other side. 'Even as he was'—without stopping to furnish Him with another cloak for what might be a cold journey across the lake, without waiting even to refresh Him with food and drink—they take Him, 'even as he was,' weary, worn, faint and spent, into the boat; and once in the boat, Nature asserted her claim. On the hard boards of the fishing-boat our Lord fell asleep, with probably a bundle of nets for an extemporized pillow. He slept the deep and dreamless sleep of a worn-out and exhausted man.

1. Under ordinary circumstances a sail of an hour and a half would have taken them across the lake. But it was to be no swift and safe passage this time. The Lake of Galilee is notorious for its sudden and furious squalls. Its position in a kind of deep gorge, below the level of the sea, and with the snowy slopes of Hermon not very far away, accounts for the lake's bad reputation in this respect. And one of these sudden and furious squalls struck the lake on this particular night. We may be sure the disciples did their best to keep their little boat afloat, for they were expert sailors. But, in spite of all their efforts, the storm was getting the better of them. 'The boat was now filling.' The furious waves dashed into their little craft, and a watery grave seemed to stare them in the face. And all the time that they were straining every nerve to ward off the threatening danger, all the time that they were fighting for dear life, Jesus was lying asleep in the stern, seemingly quite heedless of and indifferent to their trouble.

At last they waked Him, and we can catch in their words the reproachfulness of the men who thought they had been neglected in their hour of need. 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' The Master sleeping on, while His disciples were battling for dear life—here we have what to all appearance looks like *a heedless Christ.*

There are times when it does seem as if Jesus did not care. Listen to this verse: 'Behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' There you have a poor soul in sore trouble. Of course Jesus will give a swift and gracious answer. 'But he answered her not a word.' That looks like a heedless Christ. Or take this other verse. 'Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. . . . The sisters therefore sent

unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.' Of course Jesus will hurry swiftly back to Bethany on the receipt of that news, for Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. But this is what we read: 'When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was.' What would the broken-hearted sisters think of Him, when the days passed, and He did not come? Would they not think of Him as a heedless Christ? So there come times to us when the storm of doubt and anxiety and sorrow beats down upon us, and we are in sore and dire trouble, and Jesus makes no sign of coming to our help. We cry, and He does not seem to hear or answer us. We fight for very life, and He sleeps on, apparently indifferent to our fate, and we are tempted to think sometimes that He does not care.

2. But the *heedlessness is never more than in seeming.* 'Master,' said these panic-stricken disciples at the last, roughly, perhaps, awaking Him, 'carest thou not that we perish?' And Jesus was amazed at their panic. 'Why are ye fearful?' He said. 'Have ye not yet faith?' Not yet! They were slow scholars. The Master had given them proof after proof of His power. They had witnessed His authority over human disease and evil spirits. They had seen Him rescue this person and that from danger and death. The knowledge that Christ was with them in the boat ought to have been a sufficient safeguard against fear. Christ is not heedless. His presence, though He seems silent, is the pledge of our safety. Read the story of the Canaanitish woman to its close. This is how it ends: 'O woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour.' She knew before she went home that Christ was not a heedless Christ. Read the story of the sisters to its close, and this is how it ends: 'When he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth.' When they received their brother back again, alive and well, Martha and Mary would know that Christ was not a heedless Christ. Read the story Mark tells here to its close, and this is how it ends: 'And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.' Before they reached the other side, these disciples had learned that Jesus was not a heedless Christ. He never is. He may seem to be asleep sometimes, and to be indifferent to our distress; but He is watching all the time, and at the fitting moment He will come with help and succour. If we have Him in our life's vessel, the storm has not arisen that can overwhelm our little bark.

¶ 'Row on! row on!' cried Cæsar to his boatmen, as they were crossing the Adriatic in the teeth of a furious storm; 'you are bearing Cæsar and his fortunes.' 'Bearing Cæsar and his fortunes' may not have been any guarantee of safety, but if we are bearing Christ we need not fear.

Think'st thou He hears not, when for many a day
Thy knees are worn with fasting and with prayer?
Think'st thou He turns from any love away,
Because thou seest no angel on the air?

Tempter, away! each throb of pain He knows;
I will kneel on and wait His blessed time;
Up the steep staircase of Life's darksome woes
I'll climb and sing, till overhead God's chime

Breaks with one roar of an eternal sea;
And lo! if I have prayed He giveth more;
I stagger down, half-blind with victory,
Whispering the chant from out the opening door.[1]

The Stilling of the Storm

Mark iv. 39.—'And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.'

In reading such an account as this in the earliest Gospel, the modern mind is bound to ask the question: Did it really happen? And this question cannot be answered by an absolutely unbiased mind, because no one can approach the subject without having a bias for or against the possibility of the miraculous. We have to remember, however, a point upon which stress may well be laid to-day, namely, that it is as legitimate, from a scientific point of view, to approach the question of miracles with a bias in favour of their having been performed as it

[1] A. Brodrick.

is to consider it with a bias the other way. The question in this case—as in the case of all the miracles recorded of Christ—is one which cannot be dissociated from the more ultimate and crucial problem as to who Christ was. The miraculous character of the 'works' of Jesus and the historical validity of His 'signs' are bound up with the problem of His personality. If He was the Son of God, the question as to what He could or could not do embraces a far greater range of possibilities than would be the case if He was only the offspring of human parents, the son of a Galilean carpenter. If, however, we accept the answer of St Thomas, 'My Lord and my God!' as the key to the interpretation of Christ's Person, the miracles He performed ought not to prove a stumbling-block to the believer to-day.

But in this case a new difficulty presents itself. If it is nothing but natural that the Son of God should command the winds and the waves, we may well ask, on the other hand, Is it anything but supernatural that such an One should be found asleep in a boat? Are we to believe that if we had been present that day on the lake we should have seen God asleep! Is it more extraordinary to be told that the Son of God exercised control over the forces of Nature than to read that God was asleep in a boat, located at a particular spot in time and space?

Surely the crucial miracle is here revealed in the fact of the Incarnation. What does it mean? God leading a truly human life! God the Omnipotent, Lord of heaven and earth, confined within the limits of time and space, revealed in human form, experiencing all the vicissitudes and limitations of a truly human existence, teaching on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, found one day asleep in a boat in the midst of a storm! Here, surely, is the incredible thing! Here, surely, is the most amazing point in this amazing story of the Stilling of the Storm! It is the miracle of the Incarnation—God made manifest in man—that is the real difficulty! If we allow our minds to dwell upon this, the significance of it will throw a flood of light upon the meaning of our human life and God's purpose in its creation.

1. How often have we been scorned by the wise because of our anthropomorphism? We make God in our own image, so we are told. We worship a God having no objective existence as a reality apart from, and independent of, the human heart and mind which willed His existence. The unbeliever's scorn of the Christian's anthropomorphism seems at first sight justified and His argument unassailable. And yet a glance at the Babe of Bethlehem or the God-Man asleep in a boat gives us the answer. Is not the Incarnation the vindication of our anthropomorphism? We make God in our image, it is true. But does not the Incarnation show that in so doing we are obeying a divinely implanted instinct? We make God like man because man at his highest is Godlike, and the Incarnation proved it. Why was it that, when God wanted to manifest Himself to the world, He chose not the form of a flower, or the likeness of any beast of the field, or even the appearance of an angel, but 'was made man'? Why? Because the much-abused author of Genesis i., in spite of his abysmal ignorance of modern science, was right when he said, 'In the beginning God,' and not all the discoveries of modern psychology have yet succeeded in disproving his contention that God made man in His own image.

2. Further, the Incarnation teaches us to look to the truly human life of Christ as a revelation of God to man and man to God, and therefore of the God-Man to men. It means the vindication of an age-long belief that the truly human is not something alien from the nature of the Divine, but is Godlike. It means that the Nature of God, though in its height and depth, length and breadth, for ever transcending our powers of apprehension, is none the less akin to ours in its truly human content. It means that we are to look for the revelation of the Divine in the Person of Christ, not only in His difference from us but in His likeness to us; to see the Divine in the human as well as the human in the Divine. It means, therefore, the consecration of our human life and our human relationships, so far as they are truly human, and we can never despise the highest and the best in our humanity or think it of no account in God's sight.

If the desire of the human heart is to become Godlike, and the goal of all human aspiration is to become the sons of God, we shall achieve this to the extent to which we become not something other than the best in us, but this

best consecrated and hallowed by the Christ-Spirit in us. God's goal for man is not that he should become other than man, but that he should become man at his highest; and the type is set in the picture the Gospels reveal of the God-Man—truly man because truly God, perfect man because perfect God. St Paul's Christian experience as a man 'in Christ' is therefore the experience for which we must strive, and in which we shall find the realization in ever-growing measure of the purpose and end of our lives.

The truth in God's breast
Lies trace upon trace on ours imprest:
Tho' He is so bright, and we are so dim,
We were made in His image to witness Him.

3. If, then, the truly human life of Christ is a revelation to man of the Godhead in terms of time and space, we have here the key by which we may search and find out the Divine in human life. Where shall we look for it?

We may believe that the Invisible and Eternal Creator is ever revealing Himself through the material creation if only we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel; but we shall not expect to find the fullest light in any other place than within man, who is God's highest and noblest creation. Nature can and does reveal His beauty, the sea and the storm reveal His wonders in the deep, the starry heavens above reflect His glory, but it is left to the human heart to reveal the inmost essence of God, which is love.

Where, then, shall we find the Divine in human life? Look at the friendship which can be true even unto death; see the light of human tenderness and love beaming from a young mother's eyes as she gazes upon a new-born child; in such manifestations of human love we are taught to see a dim reflection, a promise, a potency of that infinite and eternal Divine Love which is God. Wherever we see the human at its highest, wherever we meet it in its moments of aspiration and inspiration, there we see the Divine, even though it be 'as in a glass darkly.' And if the imperfect reflection in our human relationships disappoints us, if it reveals an ideal seemingly impossible of human attainment, then let us take comfort by a glance at the incarnate life of One who actualized the ideal, lived the perfect life, 'leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps,' and more than that, is ever ready and eager to give us His power, in the strength of which we can struggle on and 'rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things.'

Oh, fairest legend of the years,
With folded wings, go silently!
Oh, flower of knighthood, yield your place
To One who comes from Galilee.

To wounded feet that shrink and bleed,
But press and climb the narrow way,
The same old way our own must step,
For ever, yesterday, to-day.

For soul can be what soul hath been,
And feet can tread where feet have trod,
Enough to know that once the clay
Hath worn the features of the God.

4. What is the great stumbling-block to such an achievement of the highest and best in human life? The fact of sin. The fact that, unlike the storm and the waves, we do not obey His Voice. To us, the highest of His Creation, He has given the gift of free-will. Our obedience must be voluntary, willing, conscious. Herein lies the possibility and actuality of all that disharmony which mars and spoils our lives and thwarts the Divine purpose for them. Surely here, *within us*, is a storm which needs to be subdued! And all true human happiness is achieved only as we let His Spirit govern us, even as He governs all things in heaven and in earth. Our prayer must be that we may obey His voice—that He will speak to our angry emotions, fits of temper, ungoverned passions and lusts, fierce ambition, and greed of gain—that He will speak in terms of rebuke and command: 'Peace, be still.' And if we will obey His voice, we shall find within us a Great Calm—the calm of mind and heart which belongs only to those who have learned in all things to yield the governance of their lives into His hands in simple faith and trust. In such an inward harmony we shall find a peace the world can neither give nor take away.

Say 'Peace'! O, once again, say, 'Peace, be still!'
Thou, whose almighty will

The raging winds obeyed—
Thou, at whose voice the waves their fury stayed.

Say 'Peace!' O, once again, say, 'Peace, be still!'
Command, and at Thy will,
These angry waves of life—
These tempest winds—shall cease their bitter strife.

Only, amid the tumult, speak one word;
Let Thy calm voice be heard,
And lo, O Lord, for me,
There shall be stormless sky and waveless sea![1]

Fear and Faith

Mark iv. 40.—'Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?'

1. Jesus puts the same questions to us to-day that He put to His disciples after the storm on the Lake of Galilee: 'Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?' Taken in their sequence the second question really answers the first. Fear springs up where faith fails, for faith is the one sure preventative of fear. Fear is not only an agonizing emotion, it paralyses and humiliates and degrades us, and it is the cause of the most awful wickedness. It is simply fear that keeps the nations of Europe armed at such a ruinous cost. The old chivalry that sanctified war as a crusade is dead. Fear, too, blocks the way of social progress. Year after year we are declaiming the gross injustice of a system which permits grinding poverty to exist in the midst of prosperity.

And fear has always hindered the spread of light and truth in the Church of Christ. It tried to check Biblical inquiries during the greater part of the nineteenth century. Bishop Colenso, Samuel Davidson, and Robertson Smith were all sacrificed to fear, for in each case the Church concerned has been forced to honour the memory of its heretics. Fear has kept back the honest teaching of young people, and so has prepared them to fall an easy prey to the shallow, sceptical orator. A faithless fear in every case. Can we not learn the lesson that it is wiser to trust God and to possess our souls in patience, knowing that He can guard His own cause, since truth is truth and right is right?

2. Against this fear stands faith. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.' The mind of Jesus was stayed on His Father, therefore He could sleep in the storm. But His friends did not share this happy trust. He expected better things of them, for they had had great advantages. In the first place they were Jews, who had their wonderful history to teach them. To them had come the dawn and growth of God's richest revelation. More than that, they were companions of Jesus, and had watched His wonderful works, and had imbibed His gracious teaching. He had told them of the Father who surely cared for His children since He cared even for the wild ravens and the little sparrows, and for the green flowery earth itself.

But in faith they lagged behind, and Jesus asked them, 'Why have ye not yet faith?' Perhaps two reasons may occur to our minds to explain their backwardness. One is that the very presence of Jesus in their midst raised its own impediments to a full appreciation of Him and His ministry. We are told by some that the gospel history is so remote that it cannot be expected to affect us as it affected its contemporaries. Looking back across the many centuries, they cry—

The hidden tracks of time divide
Those golden days from me.

But those who saw Him in the flesh were slow to believe. And it is doubtful if we should be more swift to take our Lord's message. He once said: 'It is expedient for you that I go away; if I go not away the Comforter will not come.' And these men proved the truth of their Master's words, for after Pentecost, when seas of persecution broke over them, no cry of panic was heard. Rather a great faith and a peace that passed the world's understanding possessed them.

¶ I was staying with some friends in Wilmington, Delaware. On my bed was a coverlet made of old brown linen spun in the old days. Over it were worked the lines:—

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest.*

God's greatness
Flows around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.

When I came down in the morning they asked me how I had slept, and my answer was, 'How could I have slept other than well with such a text as that on top of me?' The open sea was like the harbour that night. A voice through Mrs Browning had said, 'Peace, be still.'[1]

But we must remember that when the boat was rocking on the sea that day a great part of our Lord's work was still before Him. The disciples knew Him as a teacher, a wonder-worker. What more could He do? He could die; He could rise from the dead. To His greatest Apostle these two events in their final significance offered the surest ground of faith. *We* know of these things; then will it not be in a deeper tone of disappointment that He may have to say to us, 'Have ye not yet faith?'

3. Faith in—What? During the Middle Ages people took shelter in the Church as the ark upon the troubled waters of faith, but for many that ark made shipwreck in the stormy waters of the Reformation. Our Protestant forefathers turned from the authority of the Church to the Bible. Now we are watching that rock tremble beneath the assault of criticism. Not so long ago it was possible to settle argument by the quoting of texts. But that is no longer the case, for the texts themselves have been doubted. More recently we have been directed to the Christ of the Gospels—especially as He is pictured in the first three Gospels. Here at any rate, it was said, we had the touchstone of faith. But then we were told that criticism had attacked the gospel record too. What, then, is left? The mystic turned inward and gazed on the inner light. But the modern mystic is not always a Christian. How is mysticism to distinguish between Christianity and Theosophy? Shall we say that the cold flood of criticism rising inch by inch has covered all this ground? Are we left in a weltering flood of doubt? A thousand times no! What we take to be a rushing tide is nothing but a creeping fog. The landmarks are only hidden in the mists. None of the four grounds of faith has disappeared. The Church, the Bible, Christ, and the Inner Light—they are all here. They may have been misused; they may have been misunderstood, but they are all here.

(1) What is the testimony of *the Church*? Confusion has arisen because the Church has been identified with creeds and councils and the decisions of bishops; but a Pope is not the Church, and a priest is not the Church, as every one will agree. But is it not equally true that a theologian is not the Church? Those books of divinity—which we do not belittle—have their purpose to serve, but they are not the real utterances of the Church; they are only supplemented abstractions of those utterances. The testimony of the Church is the collective Christian testimony. Above the thin stream of solitary experience there is the swelling river of grateful confession flowing all down the ages—the confession of souls who have proved the goodness and power of God. Augustine at Hippo, Luther at Worms, Gordon at Khartum, and Livingstone in Central Africa, and tens of thousands in all ages have the same testimony—'It is good to trust God. We have found it so. We have put out our hands in the dark and they have been grasped.'

(2) The testimony of *Scripture* is not a question of incoherent sentences; it is a question of vital truth. Here we have a Book that speaks for its own inspiration. Quite plainly the writers were above the common people. They had reached a finer atmosphere; their vision had been clarified, and their sensitiveness quickened, and their response energized.

¶ In a true sense the Church is authoritative and the Scriptures are authoritative. It is, however, not an authority of compulsion, but the authority of inspiration. It is the authority of conviction, and there is no spiritual value in any other. It is an authority which makes its way, not by forcing assent, but by winning it through an appeal to that which is 'likest God within the soul.' Every attainment in religion is the result, not of submission to some outward law or external authority, but of obedience to a law which has become the very essence and principle of our own being.[1]

¶ The Bible, says George Macdonald, nowhere lays claim to be regarded as *the* Word, *the* Way, *the* Truth, but it leads us to Jesus, the

[1] J. Rendel Harris.

[1] R. M. Jones, *A Dynamic Faith*, 20.

inexhaustible, the ever-unfolding Revelation of God. It is Christ 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' [1]

(3) At least we will agree that whatever theory we may have about the nature of *Jesus Christ*, He is above us. It is something like a party climbing a mountain for the first time and passing into a cloud. The guide has gone on, but he calls back to the party, 'It is all clear up here; follow me, and you will find the light.' But Christ helps our faith by being not simply the great champion of faith, but the great object of faith. All down the ages He has manifested His power, so that we have far more ground for believing in Him now than they had who saw Him asleep in the little boat.

(4) But what of the difficult subject of *the inner light* helping our faith? Let us lay aside the difficult word 'mysticism' and use the simpler word 'experience.' Let us understand that faith is a matter of will and action. That is the difference between faith and mere belief in creeds. 'O taste and see.' If we haven't tasted we cannot see. It is the act of personal effort, however slight, that constitutes faith. And therefore faith is not to be looked upon as a spiritual exercise, self-contained, self-centred. The very essence of faith is that it goes out—or rather that it receives into itself something above. That is to say, it is receiving the Spirit of God. It is not without significance that our deepest thinker to-day describes his philosophy as the life of the Spirit, and what we want to understand is that the Spirit of God is quite close to us. What we need in ourselves for the awakening of faith, and in many Churches for the awakening of life, is simply not to expect a new Pentecost but to receive Him—the Spirit. If we find some difficulty in doing this let us cry, in the language of the wonderful Indian poet: 'When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my King; O my Holy One, thou wakeful One, come with Thy lightning and Thy thunder.'

¶ Mr F. Herbert Stead, the late warden of the Browning Settlement in London, narrates the following experience.[2] Troubled by certain doubts he had gone out one day into the open air to meditate.

'Walking briskly along Iffley Road,' he says, 'I came under the trees that leaned over the footway, not far from Magdalen Bridge.

'And then, O moment, one and infinite!

'He was there beside me. No vision: nothing visible. No sound: nothing audible. No reminiscence, no phantasm: but Himself, Jesus, Man of Nazareth. Unmistakably, overpoweringly He.

'The certainty of sense, the certainty of mathematical proof, the certainty of conscience were as nothing to the certainty of His self-manifestation. The puny outposts of rationalism and subjectivism with their shrill demands for permits signed by the intellect, were all swept aside as the King rode into the citadel of the soul.

'He gave me no message. He gave me no mandate. He did infinitely more. He gave me Himself. He made me know Him to be the present Companion, the living Leader, the over mastering Lover.'

[1] *Unspoken Sermons*, 1st ser., 53.
[2] *The Unseen Leadership.*

A Divided Personality

Mark v. 9.—'My name is Legion: for we are many.'

Sir George Adam Smith tells how at Gerasa he came upon some peasants who had newly dug up an ancient stone. It was the tombstone of a Roman soldier, and the inscription ran as follows: 'Publius Aelius, a soldier of the 14th Legion, 40 years old, 19 years in the army. His heirs, Marcus Gaius and Rufinus, saw to everything.' The word 'Legion' was found carved upon many other stones; it was an unhealthy, fever-haunted area, and many Roman soldiers died there. Now we consider the human mind and what we moderns know of its curious response to 'suggestion.' And then we think of this poor distracted creature roaming about, with the tombs for his only shelter. He may have seen that very grave of Publius Aelius; in any case the word *Legion* would often meet his gaze, and his mind seized the suggestion that was in it. In his wild and distracted view of things, the word *Legion*, so often seen upon the stones, that word of multitudinous might, seemed to him to describe his own condition.[1]

1. At first this story appears remote from our life; we seem to have no part in it: but

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

as we think about it we find that it is describing something of our own stresses and strains. The story touches our life simply because the man is a type of one who has lost control of himself; he is the prey of morbid passions and delusions; he is miserably unhappy and restless, and an offence to all his neighbours. The powerful passions within the man made him abnormally strong, for he could not be bound. He was so restless he could not settle down. The hand of every one was against him; little children fled at his approach; the remnant of sanity within the mind only made him acutely aware of how unplaced he was, and so he fled to the tombs on the outskirts of the village, a danger to himself and a curse to society. The records of modern medical psychology might produce a good many cases, milder perhaps than the story of the madman of Gerasa, yet to a certain extent parallel, in which a personality is torn and distracted between the warring elements in its own being.

It was a pathetic answer that the demoniac gave to Jesus when he said: 'My name is Legion: for we are many.' He knew not what he really was; only that he was tossed about and carried hither and thither by a crowd of wild and disordered impulses. Let us ask ourselves the same question. What are we in ourselves—what is our real, permanent, personal character? Do we not hesitate to answer? We do not know. We are so complex; half one thing, half another; one being at one time, another at another.

It is this complexity of life which is, perhaps, the special trial of the times we live in. In olden days, life was surely an altogether simpler business. Men lived and moved and thought in grooves which had been moulded by the customs of generations. Doubtless there were always the primary struggles—of honour and selfishness, of duty and pleasure, of doubt and faith, of love and lust. But they were waged on a simpler scale and for a clearer issue. Now, however, in all this tumult of book-writing and discussing, in the thick dust of criticism, the struggle seems to have become a disordered *mêlée*, in which it is often hard to distinguish friends and foes. In literature, in art, in life, we tend to abandon the quest of principles and are content with impressions, and are satisfied if we can balance occasional sensations which we feel to be wrong with occasional sensations which we feel to be right. Most men, in truth, never seem to ask what they are—what they are really trying to be. And even those who cherish ideals are conscious of contrary impulses which attract and claim and hold us; so that we are in doubt sometimes whether we are one man or many.

2. From that it is but a step to something much more common, in regard to which many who have never consulted a nerve specialist might give their testimony. Its simplest form is the divided self as St Paul pictures it in Romans—the eternal conflict between the flesh and the soul, both parts of ourselves. A certain saintly man was once approached by an artist who wanted to paint his portrait. 'Which of the two men in me will you paint?' was the reply: 'one is not worth painting: the other is not yet full grown.' Those who have passed through that experience may not say, 'We are Legion,' but they may truly say, 'We are two,' and the two selves in their determined wrestle and conflict bring into the life almost as much misery and trouble as the feet of an invading legion might bring into a revolting land. A life may be deprived of its unity by the sway of distracting impulse, or by the dominion of wild and wayward passion, or even in some cases by thoughts that will not cohere into a system or unite in action.

¶ We find Henri-Frédéric Amiel twice over in his journal echoing the cry from Gerasa and saying of himself, 'My name is Legion.' 'In me,' he says, 'reflection comes to no useful end, because it is for ever returning upon itself, disputing and debating: I am wanting in both the general who commands and the judge who decides.' [1]

¶ In a recent French novel one of the characters says: 'The workings of our minds are like a very intricate game of patience; it is a question of reducing them to a certain order. As long as we fail to find that order there is discord amongst them, and they jar on us; but when you come upon it you see God.' [2]

3. What do such men need? Is it not an authority which constrains our loyalty that we are all really seeking? Our life cries out for an authority. We are tempted sometimes to

[1] J. M. E. Ross.
[2] *The British Weekly*, July 14, 1927.

yield to the authority of some fascinating system; but in fact a mere system only cramps. It destroys, it does not rescue, personality. Instinctively we know that the only authority which can at once order and inspire personality is personal. The authority we need is some 'still, strong man.'

Legion in Gerasa felt the spell of such an authority in the presence of Jesus. That is shown by the man's coming to Jesus, by his instinctive sense of being in the presence of one who could help him; for he fell down at Jesus' feet with the intention of worshipping Him. All that was left of sanity and high resolve in that tormented spirit wanted to express itself in an act of adoration, of submission; but when he opened his mouth he began to blaspheme, evil gained the upper hand, and to a looker-on might have seemed to have ruined everything. But nowhere does Jesus show us His superiority to ordinary human judgments more clearly than in His treatment of the man. For, instead of rebuking him, He spoke directly to the evil thing itself: 'Come out of him and depart.' In other words Jesus judged the man, not by what he said, but by what he intended to say. With all the sinfulness apparent in human conduct, our Lord persists in acting as if sin were an intruder.

If we come close enough to Jesus with the irresistible argument of our own need we shall know His power and authority—that power which unites and controls divided and distracted lives. As He did it for the demoniac of Gerasa so He is able to do it still for lives that without Him can find no unity and no harmony. If our hearts were but entirely yielded to His control, we too might seek out our friends and tell them what great things God has done for us.

The Ultimate Discovery

Mark v. 14, 15.—'And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus.'

The division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses is a great convenience. Whoever has been perplexed by an unpunctuated telegram can imagine the difficulty we should have if our Bibles were printed as the ancient manuscripts were written—without a break from beginning to end. But the divisions sometimes gain convenience at the cost of precision, and sacrifice an illuminating emphasis to a comfortable period. There is an unforgettable instance of this in St Mark's account of the Gadarene swine. We picture the herders, trembling and aghast, hurrying to the town with the news of the wild stampede of the swine. There follows, then, exactly what would follow in similar circumstances in any neighbourhood anywhere. If the tale were told that a herd of stock—horses, camels, yaks, or motor-cars—had plunged down a steep place into the sea, a multitude, the size of which would depend only on the population at hand, would hurry out in eager curiosity to see the sight, and if nothing else were visible, to look at the scene where the disaster had occurred. That is precisely the incident as St Mark describes it. 'They went out to see what it was that was done.' The English versions put a period there. But if the period in its present place in the text is disregarded, and the sentence read to another conclusion, equally acceptable to the context, there will emerge, not only the significance of Mark's story, but the glory of the gospel itself, and the constant witness of our world to the faith which sustains Christian courage and confidence amid the confusion of the time. 'And they went out to see what it was that was done, and they come to Jesus.' They followed a social phenomenon and found the Lord.[1]

We make the same discovery still. We go searching, and we find the Lord. We pursue our inquiries wherever they may lead us, and we light on Jesus, central and dynamic.

1. *National Life.*—Think of national life, for instance, as it is in Scotland. Men visit these shores from many countries to see what has been done in education. They inspect the splendid schools and colleges, they learn of the national passion for education, and then, pursuing inquiries, they discover that it runs back to the genius of John Knox. But John Knox was not a teacher, he was a mighty preacher of the Lord; and so, going out to see what has been done, men come to Jesus. Or take America, with its vitality and its idealism, with its gallant effort to stem the tide of drink, with its extraordinary liberality. And when one asks inquiringly what lies away at the back of this large life, one comes to the Pilgrim

[1] J. M. M. Gray, *Concerning the Faith*, 99.

Fathers. That is to say, one comes to men and women who gave up everything for the sake of the Lord Christ, who left their homes and the green fields of England, in simple and splendid loyalty to Him. 'Their desires,' as Governor Bradford wrote their history, 'were sett on ye ways of God, and to injoye his ordinances; but they rested on his providence, and knew whom they had beleeved.'

2. *Missions.*—Or, again, think of missions, in their industrial and civilizing aspects. Take such a mission as Livingstonia. Go out to see what has been done there, and you find schools and colleges and hospitals; you find trade, and boats upon the lake, and highways, and cultivation of the soil. And then, back of all that civilization, where fifty years ago was blood and terror, you see the rugged face of Dr Livingstone. Now Dr Livingstone was not a trader. He was something more than consul or explorer. He was a man inspired by the Lord Jesus, and eager for the coming of His Kingdom. So, going out to see what has been done in the very heart of Africa, you come to Jesus. Multiply all that by fifty from the New Hebrides to Madagascar. Everywhere a growing civilization, and at the back of it—the Lord.

3. *Beauty.*—Nor should we forget that we make the same discovery when we engage in the pursuit of beauty. Poets and artists must remember that. Where did English poetry begin? *Not* in the love of Nature, but in the inspirations of religion. Think of architecture, that 'frozen music,' and you are back to church and to cathedral, each fashioned in the likeness of the Cross. When the common people lived in hovels, when domestic architecture was undreamed of, when private dwellings were comfortless and shapeless, art, genius, increasing toil were being lavished in the service of the faith. Think of painting, that most heavenly art, and you discover at the birth of modern painting not the portrayal of mountains or of forest, but the figures of Mary and her Child. Go out to see what has been done in the noble realms of English poetry. Go out to see what has been done in painting, architecture, music. The strange thing is that whenever you do that, never dreaming what you are going to find, like the Gadarenes, you come to Jesus.

¶ Much of the stuff and structure of our law is traced to Rome and Roman jurisprudence; but it is not always borne in mind that an age of slavery, of gladiatorial combats, of unspeakable social vice, the very name of which has passed out of current knowledge but was then accepted as a convention, could not, of itself, furnish ideals or standards of conduct, relationship, and right adequate for the present day. One of the illustrations which Doctor Hillis long ago recorded is of an English Judge who dreamed that every Christian idea had disappeared from his books of law and who, on awakening, examined them in order to see what would be the result if his dream were true. He discovered that one-third of the pages would be blank and much of the rest meaningless.[1]

4. *Social Reform.*—Again, one thinks how true this is in the great sphere of social reform. At the back of it all do we not come to Him? Who led the way in the reform of prisons? It was certainly not the general philanthropist. It was men like Howard, whose hearts the Lord had touched, and who had felt the power of His compassion. Who toiled for the emancipation of the slave? It was not the champion of the rights of man. It was men like Wilberforce, inspired by the conviction that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Go out and see what has been done for women—go and inquire what has been done for children—go and cast your eyes on Quarrier's Homes—go and measure the walls of our infirmaries—and you come *not* to a general philanthropy, or to any natural tenderness of heart: like the Gadarenes, you come to Jesus.

¶ Go down into the slums of our great cities, and tell me who is toiling there. Moral philosophers? I rarely meet them. Doctrinaires? They are at home discussing social problems. I light on Christian men and Christian women. I light on the Salvation Army, with its magnificent battle-cry of 'Blood and Fire.' When the drunkard is made himself again, when the poor woman of the street is rescued, when little homes that once were pigsties become models of neatness and of cleanness, I bear my witness, after a long ministry, that, in ninety-nine cases in the hundred, at the back of everything you come to Jesus.[2]

[1] J. M. M. Gray, *Concerning the Faith*, 102.
[2] G. H. Morrison, *The Gateways of the Stars*, 24.

The Dismissed Christ

Mark v. 17.—'And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.'

THERE are elements in this incident which bid us give good heed to it and not cast it lightly aside. It belongs to the oldest stratum of gospel material, and is told by all three Evangelists. Surely there is truth hidden somewhere in this story. Yes, and a bitter, terrible truth. These verses show a fearful phase of human nature and a pathetic aspect of Christ's work. Exactly what the incident in itself was is probably irrecoverable. But the parable of the miracle is a mirror of truth. Who can stand its challenge?

1. 'The man,' as Bushnell says, 'in Christ seems to sleep, and only the God to be awake.' We see the lake lashed to fury by the sudden storm, the boat driving upon the gale, the disciples panic-stricken, Jesus asleep. But He awoke and said, 'Peace, be still! and the wind ceased and there was a great calm.' Who, then, is this? *This* is the Perfect One who is within and without and above all things, 'ruling the clouds of the air and the fishes of the sea, as well as the fear and thoughts of man.'

Stepping ashore, their souls thrilling with an all but intolerable sense of omnipotence, they encounter a tempest of another kind. They behold a man driving before a gale of madness and fury. They see that saddest of all sights, a human wreck. But again the word of Christ works a wonder. He rebuked whatever power held this poor maniac in thrall, 'and the wind ceased and there was a great calm.'

Meanwhile His fame spread far and wide. The wireless telegraphy of rumour flashes the tidings of His deed through all the country of the Gadarenes. People come flocking to Him from far and near. Now surely we shall read of another display of power, and a greater. For Christ's great work is spiritual. And if these miracles mean anything success is assured. Who can resist the Queller of the storm, and the Vanquisher of the dark legions? The people will fall like swathes of grass before Him, and prayers for life shall rise to His ears. The Gadarenes do indeed pray to Him, but it is to beseech Him to depart from their border. Their prayer is an act of banishment, a sentence of exile. They say to Him, 'Go! *and He goeth.*'

This is not a case for power. It is Christ's great problem. To still the wind is easy. To heal the sick is not hard. But power, however great, cannot enter the moral realm. Force does not exist for the soul.

2. But the swine. With all the editing which we are told went on in former as in modern times, why did no one cut out this absurd incident? Well, what part the swine played in the actual history is uncertain, but they are essential to the parable. They explain the prayer. Christ's offence was that He valued man above all things. It was all very well, they said—His healings and His miracles—but what about their pigs? This most upsetting person with so little regard for the rights of property made things so unsettled and uneasy and uncomfortable! A maniac here and there might be restored, but look at the price we have to pay for it! And what will He do next? No, no, He would be far better away. And so they edged Him to the shore, and felt a good deal happier when the ribbon of water between Him and them had widened into a broad gulf.

The Gadarenes no doubt looked upon themselves as practical people, and held that property was sacred; they held this with a sneaking corollary—they rather preferred pigs to people. They were at least more interested in their own pigs than in the well-being of other human beings. So they broke with Jesus on no great question but simply on that. They lost a good deal by it, one judges; for it is hard to suppose that Jairus alone of men had a sick child. The healing of diseases, as Jesus healed them, is not to-day relegated to the region of absurdity, as some abrupt people relegated it forty years ago. So the Gadarenes may be considered certainly to have missed some happy experiences, which Jairus and others enjoyed. The only man who got any good from the visit of Jesus was the man who had not the sense to keep away from Him.

3. What keeps Jesus from men to-day? What is the ground of the world's quarrel with Him? Is not His offence to-day, as of old, that He puts man's welfare above all other considerations? Do men ordinarily break with

Christ on some high grounds? on dignified and noble questions? Rather is it not on something which they dare not speak out plainly? 'The secret of the heart,' says George Meredith, 'is the heart's pressing love of itself.' Yes! there is no other, and that is one which for shame no man can tell. These poor Gadarenes gave no reason for their prayer. But we know what motived their request; we know, because the heart's secret is its pressing love of itself.

It is not easy with a mind like ours, . . .
To bid the pleadings of self-love be still,
Resign our own, and seek our Maker's Will.

Self-love dismissed—'tis then we live indeed;
In her embrace, death, only death is found;
Come, then! one noble effort, and succeed!
Cast off the chain of self with which thy soul is bound.[1]

The prayer of the Gadarene was the prelude of Calvary. On no grand issue, on no sublime or august question, did the leaders of the nation finally break with Jesus. Their hatred of Him rose out of their love of self and money and place. Their interest lay in things He ignored. They asked but one thing—that He should depart. 'Away with him! Crucify him!' He stilled the storm, He quelled the rage of madness, but man's sin withstood Him. And here, in this world, in us, lies God's great difficulty. The true Cross of Jesus is not a piece of dead wood. It is a living Cross. We are the Cross. Every day He takes us upon Himself. We burden Him, we shame Him, we pain Him. We often bid Him depart. And to our cries of 'Depart,' He makes answer, 'I will not leave you desolate, I will come unto you *again*!'

In Gadara He left His Name and a man to keep it fresh in men's minds. That last word of His, 'I am with you all the days,' reaches far. He is our life; and when, after we have in many a foolish, cruel, wicked prayer besought Him to depart, we come to ourselves and amend our prayer, beseeching His pardon and aid, His answer is, 'Behold, I am with you all the days.'

[1] Cowper.

Education through Refusal

Mark v. 18, 19.—'And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'

Our Lord has just acceded to the foolish, fatal request of the Gadarenes 'that he would depart out of their coasts.' The restored man did not wish to be left behind. He clung to his deliverer. He asked to be allowed to accompany Him. How easily we can realize his feelings when his request is refused and he sees the boat disappearing in the distance. And does it not seem strange that Jesus put aside a hand that sought to grasp Him in order to be safe? His attitude in this man's case seems altogether unusual. On almost every occasion, after a miracle of healing, Jesus gave the command, 'See thou tell it to no man.' And yet here is a man who only asks to be allowed to follow his benefactor, and stay close beside Him in grateful silence, and he is bidden to go back to his friends and publish the story of his deliverance. What is the meaning of it?

One reason, surely, must have been the great need of this people for an evangelist. But the real reason was in the man himself. It was for his own sake that he was sent back, and the Lord's refusal to take him with Him was the gift of something better, the making of the man.

1. We see, first, that Jesus was training him to be *self-reliant*. Beneath the wish that showed such grateful affection, another feeling was lurking in the man's mind. It was not only gratitude that prompted the wish to be near Christ. It was a haunting sense of insecurity. People whose nerves have stepped out of their control are beset by a terrible self-distrust. They lose all self-possession and self-reliance and yield to the invasion of imaginary fears. The only person they have any confidence in is the doctor. In such cases it is absolutely necessary to separate them from the compassion of friends in order that they may be compelled to exert will and effort. It is needful, even by means apparently harsh, to restore wholesome self-confidence and to banish hysterical fears. For the case of this man it was better that he should discover the completeness of his cure by living

away from Christ, than that, living near to Christ, he should be troubled by a perpetual doubt of the reality of his emancipation. He had to summon up his courage and faith, and to some extent be thrown on his own resources. His request was a very natural one, but to grant it would not have been good for the man himself. The wish was not wrong; but Christ was wise.

This step is one which enters into all education, human and Divine. Among ourselves a very early stage of life throws upon us the necessity of exertion and self-reliance. The child must not rely too long upon its mother's arms. It must learn to walk and run alone. The schoolmaster is not content with the pupil who works well only when the teacher is at his side. We have to learn to think alone as well as to walk alone. And it would be a foolish love that would try to save the young from the necessity of using their own powers and capacities. To bring them to true manhood, the lesson of wholesome independence must be taught.

Divine education pursues the same order. Man is placed on the earth, a lonely being in the midst of scenes and powers in the presence of whose vastness and majesty he perceives his own terrifying insignificance. But the necessity of his position casts him upon his own resources. He must exert himself; he discovers himself in effort. He finds how much he can do for self-support and self-guidance in the midst of material forces stronger than himself. He learns healthful self-reliance. It is a stage in his education.

As the Divine wisdom dealt with man on the earth, so the wisdom of Christ dealt with His Church. He came into the world; He dwelt among His followers; but He did not remain with them always. 'A little while,' He said, 'and ye shall not see me.' When He had sufficiently taught, and trained them to stand alone, He left them. In the Christian character independence and self-reliance must be features.

2. The second thing is this. Jesus taught this man, by His refusal, that he must learn to *walk by faith and not by sight.* When he was still weak and ill he was helped by the visible presence of the Master. But Christ wanted him to go beyond this low state of faith. He wished him to realize those great and spiritual powers of which outward things convey but a passing expression. The flight and destruction of the herd in the waters must have given an assurance to the poor, weakened brain of the sufferer that his enemies had really gone. But now matters are changed. The man is restored. He is in his right mind; and he must exercise the self-reliance of his restored manhood. He must lean no longer upon the earthly and material presence of Christ.

¶ The great Napoleon, replying to the flatteries of his friends, once said, 'I must be present to be powerful: but there is a Man who calmly looks over the centuries and claims the human heart, and, what is more, He gets it.' [1]

This step is one which has its analogy in all education. We begin, do we not? with the concrete, with what we can see and handle. We begin with the coloured beads upon the wire, and we learn to count; but we leave these behind, and we reach figures, and from figures we go forward to algebraical signs and symbols. We begin with pictures; but we go on to letters, and from letters to words, and from words to ideas. We leave the concrete and advance to the abstract. As we grow the appeal to the hand and eye becomes less. We put away childish things. The intellectual, the abstract, the ideal, take the place of the material. 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' said Christ to His disciples. Why? They could not understand what could compensate them for the loss of His physical presence with all it meant of comfort and of joy. But they understood afterwards when the Eternal Spirit took the place of the visible Christ. 'Touch me not,' said our Lord to Mary Magdalene when she stretched our her hand, longing to cling to Him. There was a presence which, when He had ascended, would be more than a substitute for His bodily presence.

It was a hard lesson, but it was learned. The Apostle Paul seized it when he said, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' St James learned it when he thought no longer of his blood relationship with Christ, but described himself as the servant of Jesus Christ. The spiritual bond had entirely superseded the physical tie.

There was a time when men demanded miracles, and our Lord performed not a few. But He always sought to draw men from the

[1] C. G. Lang, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 198.

outward to the inward and the spiritual. And He discouraged the attitude of mind which demanded: 'Show us a sign.' Signs and wonders were at the best but expressions of the working of that eternal force of His Father which was ceaselessly working. To those who realized God everywhere and in all things, the miracle which appealed to the physical senses was not needful. Those who rested on God could do without symbols and wonders to attest His presence. They needed not to be assured that He was near. They had learned to walk by faith and not by sight.

No distant Lord have I, longing afar to be;
Made flesh for me He cannot rest until He rests in me.
Broken in joy and pain, bone of my bone is He;
Now intimacy clearer still, He dwells Himself in me.
I need not journey for this dearest friend to see:
Companionship is always mine. He makes His home with me.

3. The third point in this man's training is the giving him work to do. 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.' It was no easy command, but his love and gratitude were sincere, and he went home and witnessed by word and deed for the Master.

Clothed in his right mind, to turn
To Jesus his first thought and learn
Of Him.
In true humility desire
Is deepened closer to aspire
To Him.

But Jesus bids him homeward turn,
Through separation still to learn
Of Him.
That so his life may wake desire
In other souls who shall aspire
To Him.

Our Lord's purpose in this command was a twofold one. First, He wanted to bring the man himself into the fullest blessing and largest life. It was on that account that He commissioned him to a service in which both his own assurance would deepen and his latent powers would be developed and secured for the Kingdom. For He saw in the poor saved demoniac a possible ambassador! The remnant of a life so long lived under evil sway had glorious possibilities of loyalty and usefulness in the eyes of Christ. And so He did not feel His work complete until He had set the man He had made whole on the pathway of a service in which he would both find himself and accomplish the purpose of his Lord.

Then, also, Christ's love yearned over those unblessed ones whom this man could reach in a way quite impossible to any other. They were driving Him away. He would leave this man behind, a monument of His redeeming mercy, and bid him tell the people the amazing story of his restoration. His experience was to be his Evangel in the place where he was best known, and where on that very account the difficulties were greatest. But the Saviour's command to return thither itself carried the implicate of His own co-operation. The unseen Master would go with His servant to share the toil and multiply its result.

¶ The Rev. J. B. Ely relates that an oculist just from college commenced business in the city of London, without friends, without money, and without patrons. He became discouraged, until one day, going down one of the streets, he saw a blind man. Looking into his eyes, he said, 'Why don't you have your eyesight restored?' The usual story was told of having tried many physicians and spent all his money without avail. 'Come to my office in the morning,' said the oculist. The blind man went. When an operation was performed and proved successful, the patient said: 'I haven't got a penny in the world. I can't pay you.' 'Oh yes,' said the oculist, 'you can pay me, and I shall expect you to do so. There is just one thing I want you to do, and it is very easy. Tell it; tell everybody you see that you were blind, and tell them who it was that healed you.'

Christ and Human Need

Mark v. 22, 23.—'And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.'

Mr Coulson Kernahan, in one of his books, has attempted to picture a Christless world for

us. He dreamed of a mad world in which men said there should be no more a Christ, and they were taken at their word. There was wiped out, as a child wipes from a slate an unfinished sum, all that the great name of Jesus means, and has meant for humanity. The figure of the Christ fades out of the minds of men, and before the dreamer there stretched as on a plain, away into the infinite darkness, the wounded in life's battle, the widow, the orphan, the friendless, the sick, halt, and possessed, and upon helpless, hopeless humanity darkness and despair fall like vultures upon their prey. It is great writing, but one feels all the time that the theme is too great and too awful. Take this chapter, and let the Christ fade out of it. What a hideous chronicle it then becomes—a haunting list of miseries, a chaos of catastrophe! Out of the tombs a man with a devil, out of the house a man with a broken heart, out of the crowd a woman with an unclean disease, and presently out of the home, a little maid in a coffin. It is an awful and appalling chapter if we read it without the Name that is above every name. But it is no more appalling than life would be without Him. The weary weight of the unintelligible world would drive to madness.

But as the name of Jesus turns this dark page of human tragedy into a fair and lovely gospel, so is the difference which He has made everywhere in this troubled world, and to the shadowed lives of men.

1. The story of the raising of Jairus' daughter is a very familiar one. Of Jairus himself we know nothing beyond what the Evangelists tell us in connection with this incident. They all make a point of emphasizing his position. 'He was a ruler,' says Matthew. 'He was a ruler of the synagogue,' say Mark and Luke. Perhaps Jairus' social and ecclesiastical position is thus emphasized because there were not many of his class and rank who sought the help of Jesus. It must have cost Jairus a good deal to make this public appeal to Jesus. It was more difficult for him to seek Christ's help than it was for the blind beggars and palsied persons upon whom Christ lavished His healing grace, or even for the Gentile woman whose story is embedded in the heart of the Jairus narrative. Jairus had to humble himself. He was one of the chief men, if not *the* chief man, of the town, and his friends and colleagues, the scribes and Pharisees of Capernaum, had already taken up an attitude of hostility towards Jesus, and therefore to seek His help meant to challenge their hatred and contempt. It is easy to realize how much it must have cost Jairus to fall at Jesus' feet and beg His aid. Pride and love both tugged at the heart of Jairus that day: pride in his position and love for his child. It was a battle royal between these two mightiest forces in the human soul. But a look at his little daughter's face, with the pallor of approaching death spreading over it, and the thought of what his home would be if she, his only child, were taken away—that settled it. Love triumphed, and, throwing his pride to the winds, this ruler, this personage in Capernaum, made his way into the midst of the crowd of 'common people,' of publicans and sinners, who surrounded Jesus, and before the eyes of them all flung himself at the feet of Christ, sobbing out his prayer. In the Greek we can almost hear his sobs and his broken phrases. 'My little daughter is in extremity—that thou come and lay thy hands on her—that she may be saved, and live.' 'And Jesus went with him.'

We may stop for a moment at this. It is characteristic of the whole chapter. We see the figure of Christ towering in it above all others, calm, deliberate, never at a loss, facing such problems as had wrung from others confession of utter helplessness, moving with quiet and grave confidence through this veritable focus of the world's tragic enigmas, with the assurance of One who knew He had the key to the worst of them. He is unique in His bearing before such problems. There is nothing like it to be found anywhere else, and it is all narrated so simply, as if it were exactly what one would expect from Him.

But there is another thing. He who towers with such majesty in this chapter is yet found girded like a servant, and brought at the cry of human need as One who is sent and needs must go. Others avoid the demoniac, but He hastens to meet him. When Jairus cries, Jesus follows. When a woman needs Him, He waits, and would give her more than ever she had dared to seek. And everywhere He is acting thus, as if He had no alternative. Is not that just the whole truth about it? He never had an alternative when the heart wanted Him, and need cried out for Him. Men came to Him sometimes with keen questionings, and they had to wait; they came

with pride or with patronage, and He had nothing for them; but, coming with the cry of extremity, claiming neither position nor rights, but simply uttermost necessity, they ever commanded Him.

2. We are struck next with the silence of Christ. No word of heartening is uttered to this man. There is delay and interruption—an eternity those few minutes must have seemed to Jairus—when the woman touched the robe of Jesus, and He must needs halt, and call her, and speak with her. But no word to the anxious man, driven to desperation. All this must have been a sore trial to the father's faith. His feeling must have been: 'While we linger here, my child will die, and then all hope will be gone!'

But the delay had teaching for him, and blessing. The healing of the woman taught him that, though many throng and press on Jesus, the only touch that reaches Him is the touch of faith; and here was a new incentive to hold fast his faith. It taught him, too, that, urgent and bitter as was his need, he was not alone in it. And no one realizes such a thing without vast and vital gain. Grief, which may be so enriching to character, has always an immediate peril of impoverishment. It isolates. It is apt to shut us up in ourselves. Jairus may not have been conscious of all he was learning; but it was something that on the highway, stunned with grief as he was, he had to stand still and realize that he was not the only one in the world who was in trouble.

¶ After the earthquake at Messina (January 1909) a man was searching among the ruins for his house, when he heard a voice faintly calling for help. He soon discovered that it came from beneath some masonry, and leaning down he gave a cheering response to the cry of the poor prisoner buried below. He then found that this was his friend and neighbour, who had been entombed thus for two days and nights; and having seen nothing, thought that his house was the only one destroyed by the earthquake. And this was his moaning complaint, 'Why has this cruel blow fallen on me? Why has my house been destroyed, while the rest of Messina has been spared? Why has God punished only me?' When he was partly extricated, and his head and face came into view, he renewed the same querulous lamentations, until those around told him the truth, and he was able to see for himself how many others had suffered as badly as he.[1]

3. 'There . . . came certain which said, Thy daughter is dead.' Dead! There is no word like that leaden monosyllable. In its presence all men's skill and ingenuity, art and powers, stand abashed and dumb. Dead!

At last Christ speaks. Strange words which must have struck the numbed spirit of Jairus as almost meaningless. 'Be not afraid, only believe.' Afraid? What was there now to fear? The worst had come. Believe? What was there to believe? She is dead. But when we come to the end of our resources, Christ begins. When we write '*Finis*,' He writes, 'To be continued,' and turns the page.

Look at this magnificent quiet certainty of Jesus: 'And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.' Is not that glorious? No haste. No annoyance, as if death could ever steal a march on Him. And amid this noise He quietly enters. We are tempted to make so much of trouble, and such a mountain of death. But Christ knew that death was not the worst thing.

Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own![2]

'She sleepeth.' They laughed Him to scorn. Let them laugh, and let us thank God that His Son gave us this better word, 'She sleepeth.'

¶ The Angel of Sleep and the Angel of Death reclined at eventide on a hill overlooking the abodes of men, and, as night drew its curtains, the Angel of Sleep arose and scattered some seeds of slumber. They were borne away to human dwellings, and presently a sick man forgot his pain, and those who watched said, 'How good a thing is sleep.' A poor man forgot his cares, and those who saw it said, 'What a gift of mercy is sleep!' A mourner

[1] J. W. W. Moeran.
[2] Whittier, *Snow-Bound*.

forgot his sorrow, and those who cared said softly, 'He giveth his beloved sleep.' 'Oh, what joy,' said the Angel of Sleep, 'that thus I am able to do good unseen!' The Angel of Death looked at the Angel of Sleep in great sadness, and said, 'Alas, that I have never thanks. Men speak of me as their last enemy, and call me the destroyer.' 'Nay, my brother,' said the Angel of Sleep to the Angel of Death, 'consider. In the morning men praise me as their friend, and will not the good in the resurrection morning praise and bless thee also as their benefactor, for are we not brothers, thou and I, and are we not both messengers of the one Father?'

'And he took the maid by the hand, and she arose.' These things do not happen now. No. We cry and grieve as Jairus. Yet the Master comes home with us, and to have Him is better than the greatest miracle. Let us by love and obedience open our doors that He may enter and stay. For there is no heartsease in the world like His presence. With Him we are able to believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. Believing in Him, we dare to believe with Him, and concerning our dead we are as those that watch for the morning and the meeting, for they are asleep.

'I went down death's lonely stair,
Laid my garments in the tomb,
Dressed again one morning fair,'
Saith the elder brother.

'Then will I be not afraid
Any ill can come to me.
When 'tis time to go to bed,
I will rise and go with Thee,'
Saith the little brother.

Superstition and Faith

Mark v. 28, 34.—'She said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. . . . He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.'

Dean Goulburn has an interesting essay on 'How to deal with our Interruptions.' He points out that, while most busy men welcome interruptions much as they would the visit of a tiger or a cobra, Jesus used them as the occasions of His noblest works. It was so with some of His finest parables: it was so with this miracle.

It is a miracle within a miracle. Jesus is going on an errand of life and death. In such an hour we would resent an interruption with what seems a just resentment. But Jesus made use of it to do one of His most beautiful works.

¶ In the life of Norman Macleod it is told that, on a busy Saturday night, he was visited by a young German. He had been asked by his father, a German pastor, to inquire of two Glasgow ministers about a certain institution. He had gone to one that afternoon, his only free day, and had been received with little cordiality. He was told never to worry ministers on a Saturday. He had come on to Dr Macleod with diffidence, urged only by the desire to gratify his father. Dr Macleod received him courteously. He believed he had a pamphlet which would give the desired information; but after a long search it could not be found. 'But I'll find it,' said the doctor, 'and send it at the beginning of the week.' As he was going away Macleod said, 'Do you smoke?' 'Yes,' said the man. 'Well, then, have a talk,' said the doctor, and among other things he asked him what church he attended. 'None,' said the man. 'I am so busy at my engineering all the week that I need Sunday for a holiday.' The doctor gently pointed out that he had a soul needing exercise as well as a body. The seed fell on good ground, watered as it was by the doctor's kindly treatment. From that day the young man became the doctor's constant hearer.[1]

1. The story of our text gives us a picture of a very much afflicted life. Here was a woman who had sorrow after sorrow, trouble on trouble. She had lost health; she had lost money; she had lost hope. There are people like that. We all feel, at least in our more spiritual moods, that some kind of discipline and sorrow in life deepens, strengthens, makes more serious moral character. But sometimes people seem to have more than their fair share. What is the meaning of it? We cannot hope to explain all the mysteries of God's overwhelming providences. These things will be explained some day, when the clouds of the mystery of life are lightened up by the presence of Christ. But one thing may be said about this woman. It

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay.

was the very desperateness of her trouble that drove her to Jesus Christ. It was because she had no money that she went to the Physician who had no money and no price. Perhaps she went to Him as a last resort.

¶ It is the great sorrows of life that drive us to God. The little trials do not so much send people to God. They often make people complain, murmur, and blaspheme. A French writer has said: 'The lesser troubles of life make us blaspheme and accuse heaven, but the great sorrows make us quiet and listen.'

¶ 'When all my hope in all men was gone,' says George Fox, 'nor could I tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a voice which said, "There is One, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition"; and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.'

This woman came with an extraordinary idea in her head. 'If I can only touch his clothes,' she said, 'I shall be made whole.' That, of course, was an erroneous idea, a very superstitious idea. The clothes of Jesus were no more efficacious than anybody else's clothes. The idea that mere clothes could work a miracle in her was most dangerous. If such a superstitious idea got abroad everybody would want to secure some garment of Jesus and make a fetish of it. It is quite possible that this simple woman was merely superstitious when she touched the hem of the Master's garment. Jesus, however, called it faith, and rewarded it by healing her of her distressful malady.

Why was that? Was Jesus countenancing superstition? Could there be salvation, either bodily or spiritual, simply through a superstitious touching of external things? Surely the meaning of it was this. Jesus saw behind the woman's ignorant mind, behind her superstitious action, a soul that was really needy and that craved desperately for help. Her way of expressing it was ignorant and her action might be mistaken, but behind all that Jesus saw the thing itself. He passed over the superstition and saw the need, the willingness to be changed and to be healed. So immediately she was healed.

There is a great lesson there. It is not that it does not matter whether or not we have intelligent and enlightened evangelical views. We should be thankful that we live in a land of the open Bible, a land of the free, a land delivered largely from religious superstition. We do not believe in such things as fetishes and holy relics. We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe we have a clear, intelligent evangel. The lesson is not that it does not matter whether we hold enlightened views or whether we are superstitious. Behind that there is a far deeper question. It is the question whether the heart of man, ignorant or not, superstitious or not, honestly and truly desires to be made different by Jesus Christ. To us the question of our orthodoxy, our enlightened Scriptural views may be very important, but do we really want Jesus to change our characters and our lives, as this poor woman, with all her superstition, wished to be changed in her body? That is the point.[1]

¶ When Henry Martyn, the missionary, once saw in a Spanish church a poor old woman weeping over a stone image of the Virgin, he reflected that, however much her knowledge might fall short of his, very probably in faith and love she was his superior, and that it is by faith and love we are 'accepted in the Beloved.'

2. There is another thing in this interesting and touching human story. We read that Jesus said, 'Who touched me?' He 'looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.'

He made the poor woman come out and make herself known before all the people. Now, why did He do that? The woman was healed. Why not let her slip out of the crowd and go back to her village? Why make her come out before all the people and stand before that critical eye? Was it a necessary embarrassment? Was it kind? Well, the way to understand this is to consider the alternative. Suppose Jesus had not done it, what would have happened? This would have happened: the woman would have gone away to her village full of the idea of the magic of this new Prophet's clothes. 'I touched them, and they healed me. If only we could get hold of some cast-off garment of His, we could heal the whole place!' She would have gone home full of erroneous ideas, thinking that Christ's clothes were a source of healing, and if she could have got some discarded garment of His she would have set it up as a fetish in the village. She would

[1] P. Carnegie Simpson.

have become a preacher of downright superstition. But He called her out. He called her 'daughter.' She called Him 'Master.' He spoke to her; He established a personal relationship between Himself and her. Then when that woman went home, do you think she ever mentioned Christ's clothes? She went home full of the idea of a new Friend, a new Master, a new Saviour whom she had found. She went home to be not a preacher of superstition, but a preacher of true religion; not of Christ's clothes, but of Christ Himself.

Personal relations with Christ, a personal knowledge of Christ, as John Wesley and Charles Simeon would have used the phrase, a conscious assurance, a spiritual conviction, about which there is nothing either superstitious or second-hand, has been in the past, and will be in the future, the quickening power of a rational and progressive faith.

'Have I not seen the Lord?' There was the transcendent fact that underlay the spiritual life, the churchmanship, the apostleship, the witness of St Paul. That, too, will be the secret of all strong personal life in the days that are yet to be. Here and here alone shall we learn the deep mystery of our own being. Here and here alone shall we understand the one cause of failure—personal alienation from God, which is sin. Here and here alone shall we discover that radiant joy of living, that elixir of which alchemists had dreamed, but of which the secret was never learned till the forgiveness of sins was proclaimed by Christ regnant on Calvary, Christ, who is made to us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

The Inner Circle

Mark v. 37.—'And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.'

We find that every list of the Apostles is divided into three groups, and these groups always come in the same order, though the order of the names may vary within the group. So constant and unvarying, however, is the order of the groups that it is quite evidently not the result of accident, but indicates the relation in which the disciples stood to Christ. Had our Lord, then, favourites? Undoubtedly He had. Peter, James, and John were honoured with a regard which was peculiarly theirs. They were chosen to be admitted into His confidence in a peculiar degree. But it was no arbitrary favouritism on Christ's part. These men won their position for themselves, because they gave in larger, more overflowing measure than the others. And, because they did so, upon them was bestowed the place of honour in the days of His flesh; and in the Church the supreme place, the place of highest honour, has always been theirs.

¶ Archbishop Benson tells us that at King Edward's School, Birmingham, there were never less and seldom more than twenty-five boys at one time under the influence of the head-master, Prince Lee; their intercourse with him was hourly and their loyalty absolute. The love of him was always at the height; they were bound together by it then and ever afterwards. So too at Rugby, there were always a few that responded most readily to the inspiring force of Dr Arnold, who felt 'a love and reverence for him as one of quite awful greatness and goodness.'[1]

In the great crises of His life these men were chosen to be His companions. When He went to cure Jairus' daughter, we read, 'He suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.' They were specially chosen to be the witnesses of His gracious act and of His power. A still more important instance of our Lord's favour to the same three men occurs at the Transfiguration, where it is quite evident that they were chosen because of the whole band of disciples they were the most likely to understand and sympathize.

Again, at the agony at Gethsemane we find the Master making the same choice. 'Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.' It is quite evident that He desired their presence there to save Himself from the sense of utter desolation.

Of course there may have been occasions when for special reasons He chose other of His disciples, as no doubt He gave to all of them marks of His favour and loving regard; but the fact remains that these three men seem to have received an intercourse denied to the others. This is in line with the record of our Lord's whole

[1] G. H. S. Walpole.

ministry. His heart had its preferences, as in His noted and special love for little children, and for the weak and outcast generally. He preferred the company of the publicans to that of the Pharisees, for reasons which He Himself gives. So that, outside even of the disciple circle, He had special intercourse and friendship. The notable instance of that is with the household at Bethany. His whole life was ruled by love, and we know that He loved all men, but it means something special when we read that 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.'

Two questions rise in our minds: Is it consistent with our conception of Christ's nature to attribute to Him what we almost think a weakness? and is it consistent with our view of God to attribute to Him anything approaching to favouritism?

1. The first difficulty is that it seems derogatory to our high thought of Christ's nature to suggest that He, like other men, needed the strength and comfort of human friendship. This type of difficulty is a common one, due to preconceived ideas as to what our faith in Christ's Divinity demands. We are inclined to start with a cast-iron theory and then insist on accommodating the facts to suit it, instead of taking the facts on which to build our theory and by which to test it. Also, we have to safeguard Christ's complete humanity as much as His Divinity. If we think it unworthy of Him that He, like other men, should have a craving for human fellowship, and in the great crises of His life longed for the company of loving and sympathetic hearts, the answer is the simple fact that in this He *was* like other men. He can be the great High Priest of our humanity because He could be tried on all points, like as we are, because He knew the joys and sorrows of human life and drank our mingled cup and tasted what it is for a man to die. In this matter of friendship there was need for some closer fellowship when He could unbare His heart and be strengthened by sympathy, however imperfect.

¶ Cardinal Newman, in his beautiful sermon on 'Love of Relations and Friends,' remarks on the apparent strangeness of the fact that the Son of God should have had private friends. 'This shows us,' he says, 'first, how entirely He was a man, as much as any of us, in His wants and feelings; and next, that there is nothing contrary to the spirit of the gospel, nothing inconsistent with the fulness of Christian love, in having our affections directed in an especial way towards certain objects, towards those whom the circumstances of our past life, or some peculiarities of character, have endeared to us.'

Further, there was the instinct of the teacher, in making a selection. He could advance with men only as far as they were able to go. The grade of discipleship depended on the degree of spiritual sympathy and understanding. The Kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom of ideas, and it was necessary for its extension that some should grasp the ideas and enter into its spirit. This, of course, is the reason for the existence of a disciple circle and for the long and patient training of the Twelve. The further limitation was to some extent due to the same reason, though undoubtedly the chief reason lay in the personal region which explains all friendships.

¶ The great painters of the Middle Ages took pupils into their studios. To every aspirant they gave honest attention. When one came who was swift to understand his master's conceptions, eager to imitate his strength of line and purity of colour, humbly and patiently reverent in his zeal, the secret was disclosed. In our own day Edward Burne-Jones became a disciple of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He spent still and strenuous hours in copying his master's works, studying their distinction, and aspiring after their spirit. With a trembling heart young Burne-Jones took his drawings to Rossetti to receive his judgment upon them. The honest painter looked at them in silence, and with a word of emotion he said, 'You have nothing more to learn from me.' He had entered into the master's secret.[1]

In all our friendships there are degrees of intimacy settled for us by the amount of common spiritual footing we possess. Temperament and capacity do something in establishing the particular relation, but most of all the amount of real fellowship is settled by sympathy, by community of soul. Thus we may have many friends, all dear; but at the same time have one or two who are admitted into the Holy of Holies. There are a few who have more sympathy with us and with whom we have more real affinity. Similarly, the relation

[1] W. M. Clow.

of the disciples to Jesus was settled by their spiritual susceptibility. So that if we make it an offence that He should have had favourite disciples, it should be as much an offence that He should have disciples at all.

2. The second difficulty is that it seems unworthy of the Divine purpose to ascribe any sort of exclusiveness to it. We may admit that it was no weakness for Jesus to have friends and narrowing circles of intimacy with men, but there remains the question whether it is consistent with a high thought of God to attribute to Him anything that looks like exclusive dealing. Here we come into sight of the whole problem of God's method of working in the world. Does He choose out men and nations, dowering men with special gifts and blessing them with special privilege? Now, everything depends sometimes on the way a question is asked, and we may state this fact, as has often been done, in a rigid dogma which offends the mind and conscience of men. Here also facts are worth more than theories. It is a fact that the world is built on this principle, and the whole history of revelation implies this Divine method. There *is* a chosen people and chosen men within the nation, and it is absolutely in keeping that there should be chosen disciples; for we must remember here that the problem is not that there should be favourite disciples but that there should be chosen disciples at all. The Twelve themselves were deliberately singled out from among many who were attracted to Jesus and even followed Him. We read that 'he called his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.' He could say of them all and to them all, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' The differences among men could not be ignored by Jesus.

The ultimate explanation of all Divine choice lies in the Divine purpose. We state the question wrongly when we state it in terms of privilege and mere favour. It has to be stated in terms of the purpose for which the favour is granted. And Christ's purpose was to train these men for a great work. It is selection, not to privilege but to *service*. The favour means always corresponding responsibility. To all His disciples He said, 'I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.'

Had the disciples no choice in the matter? There is a true sense in which they chose their Master, or rather, Jesus chose them for the same reason for which they chose Him. In all human relations, in all types of friendship, it is to make a futile distinction to separate the two processes of choosing and being chosen. Emerson could say truly, 'My friends have come to me unsought; the great God gave them to me,' but on the other hand his friendships were conditioned by the kind of man Emerson was. He could have great friendships since he had the quality of being a great friend. If we cannot make too fine distinctions between choosing a friend and being chosen by him, still less can we make too fine distinctions between choosing God and being chosen by Him. The Master takes His disciples with Him as far as they can go, and the humble and loving heart will be taken deep into the secret of His presence. The relation gathers richer and sweeter contents. 'I call you no longer servants,' He said, 'but I have called you friends.' To be called friends by our Master may well be made our soul's ambition, and the way, we know, is simple: 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.'

Just to ask Him what to do
All the day,
And to make you quick and true
To obey.
Just to know the needed grace
He bestoweth,
Every bar of time and place
Overfloweth.
Just to take thy orders straight
From the Master's own command.
Blessed day! when thus we wait
Always at our Sovereign's hand.[1]

The Carpenter of Nazareth

Mark vi. 2, 3.—'From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.'

THIS is the only place where we are told that Jesus was an actual worker at the trade of

[1] F. R. Havergal.

Joseph. Nor is there a sentence in the Old Testament that even intimates that the Messiah of the world would be a carpenter. Yet it is well to remember that for eighteen years the Son of Man lived the life of an obscure toiler in a despised village.

Our Lord left Nazareth when He began His Galilean ministry and made His home in Capernaum. After a year or more He revisited Nazareth—only to meet the old prejudices. His fame had gone before Him and He spoke to the people on the Sabbath day. But 'a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own home.' A man's fame thrives best at some distance, and often suffers by his presence, either because of the childishness of men who judge by sight alone, and who, when they have seen the outside of a man's life, think they have seen all there is to see, or because of the alloy of humanity which is present even in the greatest and best of men. The little, the commonplace, the indifferent enter into every man's life. 'No man,' said Augustine, 'is without blemish.' One is blemished by some passion he cannot resist; another, like St Paul, by some physical deformity; another by the ill-reputation or poor condition of his parents or near relations. To those who read or hear of him these things are invisible, like spots in the sun; but his presence recalls and reveals them. 'Fame,' said Pindar, 'fails at the threshold.'

¶ It is a universal law that Montaigne sets down in his quizzical way when he remarks that at home he was reckoned as just a scribbling country laird, in the neighbouring town as a man of recognized business ability, farther afield as a noted author, and that the longer one travelled from him the greater he became.[1]

So it befell in Nazareth. The alloy of humanity dimmed the fame and hid the glory of Jesus. His intimate relationship with humble people, the fact that He had brothers and sisters; that He was a carpenter and with His own hands, as St Justin Martyr has it, had once made their ploughs and yokes; that by such means He had acted for years as the breadwinner of the family—all these things, so entirely creditable to Him as an ordinary man, told against Him heavily the moment any extraordinary claim was made in His name. No one hinted at anything wrong either in His life or even in His relatives, but what was known about Him was so well known, so commonplace, that it was felt to be incompatible with any element of majesty in His person or of authority in His teaching.

It would be unfair to treat the outburst of the lowest and rudest thought of Galilee as though it expressed the prevalent Jewish idea of labour. Far from it. Handicrafts were specially honoured amongst the Jews, and the occupants of the highest posts of learning were most familiar with the lower forms of human toil. The teacher of that Rabbi Hillel who died only a few years before the birth of Christ was in the habit of saying, 'Love labour.' We owe to the family of the far-famed Gamaliel the penetrating saying, 'Beautiful is the union of the study of the law with some honest calling, for by the diligent pursuit of both a man is weaned from sin, but all study unaccompanied by work ends in vanity and draws sin in its train.' The baseless prejudice against manual work had no place in Hebrew life; and, therefore, this question of His fellow-citizens must be regarded as giving voice to their meanest thoughts, as the envenomed outflow of their resentment against the new teacher's claims.

1. There are few to-day who do not possess a conventional belief in the dignity of labour, but the world's practice contradicts the theory of the schoolroom. Nineteen centuries of Christian teaching have not availed to cure even the confessed followers of Christ of the vulgar pagan notion that manual labour and humble household duties, while well suited to the common people, accord ill with gentle breeding and refined culture. Where reduced circumstances make labour a necessity, we regard it as a calamity to be endured, a cross to be borne, rather than as an opportunity of entering a realm which has a glory and a joy all its own. We are slow to realize that, in toiling with His hands, our Lord did not redeem a sordid business, but rather set the seal of His approval upon one of life's finest elements, that in Him the world heard the voice of the Creator pronouncing labour good.

¶ Perhaps Christ's truest message was the emphasis He put on labour. He was a labourer, and most of His disciples were also. To be repositories for the truth for which He came to

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 22.

die He chose mostly not the rich, but the labouring men. I have personally found more inspiration in the cottages of fishermen than in many palaces of the rich. Many of my most helpful and richest hours have been in the company of these children small in the world's eye.[1]

The attitude of our Lord towards His early work smites us with its utter reality. He did not wrap it in the folds of romance, regarding it as a disguise of rags and tatters in which His kingly soul travelled incognito. Men of genius have left it on record that they viewed their years of obscurity as merely a prelude to their years of fame, treading the rough cobble-stones of their native village as if they were already pacing the marble halls of their ambition. Self-made men glory in the humble origin which makes their success appear all but incredible. But in all the gospel records there is not a single word, or even a hint, to suggest that Jesus regarded His years of manual labour as an inferior stage of His life—a mere foil to His public ministry. Thoughts of all that lay beyond the carpenter's shop were surely ever with Him; yet we cannot imagine Him working with slack hand while He dreamt of future glory. His parables show rather how entirely at home He was in the world of the labouring poor, and with what intimate sympathy He entered into every detail of humble life. When He wanted to bring the tidings of the Kingdom of God home to the hearts of the people, He turned for illustration, not to the legends of great sages and famous potentates with which Oriental teachers like to point their moral, but to the housewife working the leaven into her dough, the hired labourers in the market-place, the patient sower in an uncertain field, the gardener lamenting over a barren tree, and many other occupations and happenings.

The simplest sights we met—
The Sower flinging seed on loam and rock,
The darnel in the wheat; the mustard-tree
That hath its seed so little, and its boughs
Wide-spreading; and the wandering sheep; and nets
Shot in the wimpled waters, drawing forth
Great fish and small; these and a hundred such
Seen by us daily, never seen aright,
Were pictures for Him from the page of life,
Teaching by parable.[2]

[1] W. T. Grenfell, *What Christ Means to Me*, 79.
[2] Sir Edwin Arnold.

2. We may be certain, from all we know of life, that these years of carpentering would leave their mark on the public ministry of our Lord. They would suggest much; they would give Him certain insights; they would impress certain truths upon His mind. It was not alone in the house and in the field that He was gathering material for His teaching. He was learning things, just as we all learn them, in the quiet discharge of daily duty, which were to help Him when everything was changed. The village shop was not only full of logs, for Him it was also full of parables, as was His mother's kitchen, and the garden, and the fields.

(1) One truth we may reverently think He would learn was how much may lie hidden in a thing. Picture the waggoner delivering a tree that had been ordered by the Carpenter of Nazareth. The Carpenter would begin to work it up; He would saw it into planks and blocks; He would use it for the orders He was executing. And by and bye, round His little workship, would be ranged the various things that He had made—a plough, a chair, a wooden bowl or platter. What! a plough hidden in that tree—that rough, gnarled creature of the forest—and platters and bowls to feed the children with. Then the Poet-Carpenter would halt a moment, and dream, and say quietly to Himself, 'Ah, how much may lie hidden in a thing.' Did He forget that when carpentering days were over? Was not that one glorious secret of His hopefulness? He saw the Kingdom in a mustard-seed. He saw the citizen of heaven in a child. He saw, as no one else has ever seen, how much lay hidden in the human heart and in the lives and characters of common men.

(2) Another truth might be the pains it takes just to transform a thing. That would be deeply graven on His heart. An Eastern plough was a very simple thing, but the tree has to be changed into the plough. Who can tell what faults and flaws are in it? Pains and patience go to all transforming. Was *that* forgotten when carpentering days were over? Think of the first disciples. Not in one hour did Simon become Peter. There is nothing more wonderful in history than the long, patient, and persistent way in which the Lord transformed His followers. In a single instant He could heal the leper or raise the dead. It took many a

thousand weary instants to transform Simon into Peter.

¶ His trade taught Him that to live means to transform what is dead and useless into what becomes living and useful; that the basest material, moulded and refashioned, may become precious, lovely, and a helpful friend to man; it taught Him that in order to save it is necessary to transform, and that, just as a bed for the child and its mother may be fashioned out of the gnarled and twisted trunk of an olive-tree, so may the most iniquitous usurer, the most wretched harlot, be transformed into beings fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.[1]

3. We live under conditions unknown in the day of Jesus, in a society much more complex, it is true. But we, too, must determine to bring to our work the spirit of Jesus in the workshop at Nazareth. The difficulty is that we have lost our love of work. We have ceased to regard our work as a gift and call of God. We toil for gain, and take no honest pride in our labour. It is love of gain that makes both the conscienceless capitalist and the intractable workman. To recover our sense of the innate sweetness of toil, to relearn the secret of doing all things as unto God, to believe that to make good shoes is, in truth, Divine service—that is the first step towards making all conditions that degrade labour impossible. When employers and employees together fight for the redemption of work itself—for the cleansing of what God has pronounced clean, and the lifting up out of the mud of greed what man should wear as a crown of glory—then true salvation will come.

And for those who have learnt this secret at the feet of Jesus, the workshops of life are radiant with the footsteps of One who does not merely 'pay fair wages' to His servants, but who abides with them—the Saviour-Comrade of all who labour.[2]

If I could hold within my hand
  The hammer Jesus swung,
Not all the gold in all the land,
Nor jewels countless as the sand,
  All in the balance flung,
Could weigh the value of that thing
Round which His fingers once did cling.

If I could have the table He
  Once made in Nazareth,
Not all the pearls in all the sea,
Nor crowns of kings, or kings to be,
  As long as men have breath,
Could buy that thing of wood He made—
The Lord of Lords who learned a trade.

Yes, but His hammer still is shown
  By honest hands that toil,
And round His table men sit down,
And all are equals, with a crown
  No gold nor pearls can soil.
The shop at Nazareth was bare,
But Brotherhood was builded there.[1]

[1] G. Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 18.
[2] E. Herman, *The Touch of God*, 194.

Jesus Could Not

Mark vi. 5, 6.—'And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief.'

THE chapter which precedes the text records marvels of supernatural power. Jesus had just rebuked the storm and cast out demons, healed the sick and raised the dead; yet the moment He comes back to His own country with all the glory of His wonders on Him, He can do scarcely anything. He is checked at once, as if the powers of darkness had suddenly become too strong for Him. Something of the sort it must have been, for Jesus marvelled. Once before He marvelled at the Roman centurion's faith; and only once again He marvels now at the unbelief of His own countrymen. We marvel too, but we often marvel wrongly, knowing neither the meaning of the Incarnation nor the power of God, nor even the mysterious freedom He has given us of choosing evil rather than good.

1. In the first place, the power upon earth of the Incarnate Son of God was not unlimited. He came not hither with the glory which He had before the world was, but in form as a man, in the likeness of flesh, and tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. As a Son of Man He overcame the world, as a Son of Man He did His works, and as a Son of Man He shall come to be our Judge hereafter. His mighty works are signs not so much of deity as of the perfect sinless manhood which is the image of God. It

[1] C. M. Sheldon.

may be there is none of them we could not do ourselves, if only sin had never touched us. After all, the great sign He gave was not His mighty power, but His perfect love and patience. That power was only His for the work of God, not for selfish or unworthy ends. He could turn water into wine to help others, but not stones into bread to feed Himself. He might wither a fig-tree for a sign, but not cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple to confound the unbelievers in the courts below. So it was here in His own country. The few sick folk He healed are enough to show that His power was the same as ever. But if He had done more, He would have driven the unbelievers to choose between forced belief and fierce resistance. And this is precisely what He *could not* do.

2. Again, power is only a thing to be used, not one of the essentially good things like faith and love, of which we never can have too much. Power to do the right thing is good, but all power beyond this is so much weakness. This is what we forget when we think to honour God by looking up to Him as a Being of unbounded power, who can do all things without let or hindrance. But it is not true that God can do all things, for there are some things which we know that He cannot do. He cannot deny His own holiness. He is not a man that He should lie, or a son of man that He should repent. The mere physical power which holds the universe together might be equal to any act we can imagine; but something of His power God renounced when He created the world, and something more when He created man. He did not give him freedom with one hand only to take it away with the other. As far as man has any real power of choosing between good and evil, so far must God have renounced the power of compelling him to choose good rather than evil. In this the Incarnation makes no difference, otherwise our Saviour's manhood would be utterly unreal.

¶ H. G. Wells, in his *Mr Britling Sees It Through* and other war-time novels, maintained that God may be good, loving, benevolent—he believed He was, the 'Comrade God'—but He cannot, he said, be all-powerful. He is willing but not able. So He was represented as a 'finite struggling God.'

Now the root-error in such attempts to call in question the omnipotence or almightiness of God because of the facts of evil in the world is a false conception of omnipotence—that conception which thinks of it in sub-Christian and non-moral terms as the bare abstract power to do anything, the omnipotence of mere caprice or arbitrary might. This, however, is to make omnipotence an absolute, not a relative, attribute of Godhead. Whereas if love is the absolute attribute or central essence of God, and omnipotence but one of the relative attributes, as it is in the Christian view—then His omnipotence must be exercised always in accordance with the ends of Fatherly wisdom and love.[1]

3. This brings us to the third point—our own mysterious power to defeat the will of God by doing evil. That power is inconceivable, so long as we think of God as mere power. Yet it is undeniable that we are doing every day the things we know He hates. No, God is holiness indeed, but not mere power. Even the God who spake on Sinai is a God who showeth mercy unto thousands of generations; and in Christ He has shown us of His real self as light and love. Our freedom is real, and it is given us in love. No forced hallelujahs does He ask of us, but a willing offering and a service which is perfect freedom. And for us freedom to do right means also freedom to do wrong. If man is to obey freely, he must also be free to disobey. This is the meaning of what we have already said—that all power beyond the power to do the right thing is so much weakness.

¶ May we not say that God knew that a free humanity could rise higher than was possible to any fatalistically determined humanity, and so for Himself and for us He took the risks of our freedom? A world built on these lines is a greater world than a world built on the lines of determinism. It has been truly said by Dr Iverach, that it is a greater manifestation of Divine power to make beings that can make themselves, than to make beings that cannot. For the former are men and the latter are puppets, and puppets after all are only things.[2]

The state we hope to reach in the other life is not a state of freedom. It is not a state where we have to strive with painful efforts and

[1] J. M. Shaw, *The Christian Gospel of the Fatherhood of God*, 17.
[2] D. S. Cairns, *The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*, 204.

many a failure after some distant goal of holiness. It is a state where God has made our inmost nature holy like His own, a state where we live in Christ and Christ lives in us and keeps us, so that we can no more sin than He.

Meanwhile sin is real. The freedom of the natural man is only a freedom to choose evil, for evil the natural man will always choose. Yet God has not left Himself without witness in the heart of every man. The voice of conscience is the word of God within, which we may stifle with untruth or drown in the noisy clatter of eager passions; but when it speaks again, it will speak of judgment that comes nearer as we harden ourselves in sin.

Of one thing we may be sure. He that did no mighty works for His own countrymen will do none for us. What would be the use of them? Let Him come down from the Cross, said some, and we will believe; and perhaps they thought they meant it; but they were not persuaded when He rose from the dead. God's way is a more excellent way. He cares not to overwhelm us with marvels, but commends to us His love, in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. His kingdom is not a kingdom of might, but one where he that will be first must be the servant of all. Only by love serve one another, and the cup of cold water given in His name shall not be forgotten. In Christ all enemies are overcome; and He shall fill our daily life with greater works than those He could not do in His own country.

Paralysed by His Audience

Mark vi. 5, 6.—'And he could there do no mighty work. . . . And he marvelled because of their unbelief.'

He could do no mighty works—because of His audience! For surely that is the significance of these familiar words. One usually thinks of an audience as passive, receptive, mere spectators at the performance. But here it is active, positive, repressive, subtly limiting the central actor in the scene. An audience has the power to make or mar. Every musician knows the mystic influence of an assembly upon her powers of song. An audience can envelop a singer in a chilling atmosphere until the very vocal chords seem frozen, or an audience can surround her in a genial sympathetic atmosphere which is like a sweet morning in the spring; and like a bird she can sing! It is the same with the preacher. A poor sermon sometimes finds its explanation in the poverty of the audience.

¶ There are some churches in which a cold waft seems to numb one, and the words freeze and fall like snow, and melt at once into trodden slush; in which one has the unhappy feeling that no one is worshipping, that the place is more a lecture room or a concert hall than a real church. There are others where great swift-running tides appear to seize and lift and sweep one on his way far quicker, surer, better than he could have gone alone. For the Communion of Saints is a real fact.

'You weren't in church to-day,' Whyte said to me one evening; 'where were you?' 'I was preaching to a certain congregation,' I replied. Whereat, leaning forward, he asked eagerly, 'And how did you get on?' 'I found it very cold,' I answered. 'Cold,' cried he—'cold! I preached there two years ago, and I have not got the chill out of my bones yet!'[1]

1. This brings before us a very profound and operative law in human life, and the law is this: Our attitudes are active as well as our actions. We are pathetically wrong in assuming that energy is only emitted in so-called practical deeds. Our dispositions are as active as the more visible services. Dispositions are like quiet, unobtrusive, hidden radium, and they radiate without ceasing. The character of the disposition determines the character of the radiation. It may be stimulative or repressive, tonic or laxative, it may embrace or enervate. In this secret, subtle way we play upon one another without ceasing. No man can make himself uninfluential. Every life affects every other life, and helps to make or mar it.

These silent personal influences can affect the operation of the ministries of grace. An apparently passive audience can paralyse the Lord. Human life-currents can cripple the action of the Divine. The gracious ministry of the Divine Healer can be frustrated by the dulling, deadening, stiffening influence of those who are round about Him. We assume that the Lord Jesus Christ is present in every assembly which is gathered together for worship. That is the fundamental assumption on which

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 105.

the Church builds its life and hope. The Lord Jesus is present and 'waiting to be gracious.' And yet we can paralyse Him, and nothing great and gracious will be wrought. For, let it be remembered that the disabling people who fill the New Testament narrative were church-going people. They had just come out of their synagogue. The words of the old prophets still lingered in their ears, and the praises of the old psalmists were still warm upon their lips. This was the class that paralysed the Lord of Glory.

2. What was the condition of the people concerning whom these words were spoken? From what did their repressive influence proceed? Two things are mentioned. These people refused the Master honour and credence, and in those conditions His ministry was rendered impossible.

(1) They refused Him *honour*. They disparaged Him by their petty thoughts about Him. 'Only a peasant!' 'Only a carpenter!' All His life He had lived among them in that little town, and they had seen Him day by day, and they had seen nothing extraordinary in Him. It often needs special insight and candour and grace to see anything extraordinary in people who live next to us, and that is especially true in a small community. Moreover, insight, candour, and grace were not characteristics of the Nazarene people. Prejudice, jealousy, passion, rather. And the temper which marked them now may have gone far to prevent Jesus all His life from manifesting Himself to that little gossiping, bigoted village. His social position also was against Him. This we see when they asked in scornful surprise, 'Is not this the carpenter?' Why, Jesus had been the workman to whom they had sent their ploughs and yokes to be repaired, and who had been sent for to ease their doors and repair their furniture. Whoever thought of Him as being anything else but a carpenter? How could He be a prophet? Who had trained Him? There was something suspicious about His claim; He could not be genuine. Nobody had ever thought anything of Him, and if they accepted Him now they would pass condemnation on their own previous attitude to Him.

¶ I remember hearing a true incident about one of the great cotton lords of Manchester. He was supposed to be suffering from some particular complaint, and he travelled all the way to Vienna to consult a doctor considered to be a great specialist on this particular disease. 'You are an Englishman?' the doctor said. 'Yes,' the patient replied. 'May I ask from what part of England you come?' 'Manchester,' was the answer. 'But why did you come from Manchester all the way to me? The greatest authority in the world lives in your own city'; and he named one of the medical professors of my old university.[1]

¶ Jeremy Bentham, Hazlitt says, was better known and more highly esteemed on the other side of the globe than he was in his own land.

(2) They refused Him *credence*. Their prejudices made a fine and fruitful trust impossible. They manifested the attitude of sceptics, not in the way of large, airy openmindedness, but with the small-eyed vigilance of the police. And they manifested the attitude of critics, not in the sense of a sane discrimination, but in the peevish ministry of finding fault. And because they were sceptics and critics of this type, nothing could save them from becoming cynics. 'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils!' This was their moral and spiritual condition. There was nothing large in their thought, nothing chivalrous in their demeanour; their prejudices gave them the conception of a little Christ, a conception which did not compel them to hold their breath in reverent awe. And so He was rendered impotent.

3. The times have changed, our environment has altered, but the essential conditions remain. If the Lord's work is assuredly checked when the Church denies Him honour and trust, how stands it with us to-day? Are we supplying the requisite conditions in which the mighty works are wrought? Do we honour the Lord? Take that fine honour which every chivalrous man has for every woman: have we any analogous feeling for our King? To honour Christ is, of course, much more than this, but does He receive even this measure of our regard? We often sing very lustily, 'Crown Him Lord of all!' And so did mockers in an olden day, who 'put a reed in his right hand, and bowed the knee before him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!' The only fitting honour for a king is a fine coronation, and the willing and glad honour of His subjects. May it not be that the mighty works are tarrying among

[1] J. D. Jones.

us because we have given our Lord a mock coronation?

And do we really believe in Him? Is the belief such that there radiates from it a stream of favourable personal force, co-operating with the gracious will of our Lord? Do we believe in His power? Do we believe in His dependability? Do we believe in the mighty acts He has already wrought? Do we believe in His grace and power to repeat them in our own day? Does our belief in Christ count as a positive asset in the progress of the city and in the welfare of the race? Or is it a mock heroic thing wrongly labelled, and does there really flow from our life a stream of anti-Christian energy which hinders the progress of the Kingdom of God?

John and Jesus

Mark vi. 14.—'And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.'

When the news reached Herod of our Lord's mighty works what was the thought that presented itself to his guilty mind? None other than that John, whom he had executed, had been raised from the dead to haunt his miserable soul. His conscience made him a coward and he was shaken by his superstitious fears. Without evidence of any kind this man, who believed in neither resurrection nor angel nor spirit, said: 'It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.'

How easy it is to bring into our life that which we can never cast out, to raise ghosts we can never lay. One motion of Herod's hand on that fatal night took off the prophet's head; and, the moment after, not the half of his kingdom, not a world's ransom could undo that deed which, to the king's dying hour, might keep him company as with the doom of the damned.

> Our acts our angels are, or good or ill
> Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

We may imagine that we lose them for a time, but they never lose us. Whatever else men may appear to escape, they never escape the consequences of what they do in one form or another. We know how readily the world subscribes to the superficial side of the maxim that 'nothing succeeds like success!' And when men who have exchanged their life for what they call their world, roll past in their chariots of appearances and self-importance, we say, 'What fortunate men!' But Faust was a fortunate man until it suited Mephistopheles to insist upon his side of the bargain. We must not decide only on a prosperous exterior, we must know what moral deterioration has to say about it. Sooner or later every man comes to a place in his life when he must find his happiness or its opposite, not in what he has, but in the conscience of how he came by it. The day is also coming when all tainted success will mock as only a bad record can mock, when there is but time left to regret and none to retrieve the past.

1. But about this question of conscience. As there may be, we are told, an over-emphasis on sin, so may there be an over-strain put on conscience. A man's conscience is what he allows it to be. It can become by cultivation sensitive; it can by a little healthy neglect practically cease to be heard or felt. Those who talk in this fashion talk foolishly. Conscience in a man may seem as dead, but he never knows what turn may bring him into grip of the truth that there is a resurrection of the dead. Nothing in life is unrelated; and whatever we do which cannot pass the bar of our higher self to us is sin. It may sleep to-day, but it sleeps to wake. They play with words who tell us that conscience may speak with two and very different voices in any two men, and over a like transaction. Conscience never speaks with two voices. We know what wickedness is to us, and what we know is wickedness it is wicked for us to do; and conscience always rings true to this fact. That our neighbour or competitor in business can do a shabby or an admittedly wrong thing, and go home with what is called an 'easy conscience,' a thing which, were we to do, would send us home in misery—is no question whether he has, or has not, a conscience. He will be judged, not by the conscience he had, but by the conscience he might have had.

¶ 'When I was an undergraduate,' says Canon Peter Green, 'I and a number of other men and some ladies, members of my host's family and

of another family of neighbours, were talking in the smoking-room one evening in the Easter vacation. The talk turned on questions of right and wrong, of the opportunity or lack of opportunity of a good life for children born in the slums, of hereditary taints, of free-will and determinism, and of similar matters likely to interest young people. Suddenly the youngest son of the house, a boy not quite thirteen, whom, I think, we had all forgotten, struck in. He said, "You know, Mr Green, that's all rot. Any decent fellow knows what's right and what's wrong; and can do right if he chooses." No doubt there was much of the crudeness and cocksureness of youth in the dictum. Yet I am sure that it did really represent his own soul's experience. For I knew him well for many years, and could thoroughly endorse what his housemaster said of him to me many years after, "The cleanest and most right-minded boy I ever had under me." '

An educated conscience does not mean a morbid conscience; but it does mean the inward monitor put there by our Creator as guide and danger-signal in crossing the perilous way between the two eternities. Ignore it, disobey it, and it ceases to be either. For the selfish deed, the evil motive, the dark imagination, the reckoning may seem neither to-day nor to-morrow, but there will come a day when they will be real and ever before us.

2. In all this there is no gospel. The murder of the Baptist is a part of history; and the things said about conscience are as much the burden of pagan as of Christian teaching. We begin to touch gospel when we ask the question: Was Herod right in the conclusion his guilty conscience had jumped to—that John had risen from the dead? We know he was not. The mighty works of which the king had heard were not wrought by John. They were the works of Him concerning whom John had said: 'He that cometh after me is mightier than I.' They were works of pity, of compassion, of healing, of an all-embracing love—they were the works of the Christ. It was no stern shade of the murdered prophet doing occult things, but the presence and power of a Saviour who was in the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be redeemed.

Long before St Paul wrote his great letter to the Galatians, the wisest teachers of the race had been saying with every variation of expression, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap.' Many of the accredited teachers of our day, outside Christianity, are saying the same thing. Judgment, they say, both physical and moral, works automatically. What a man does instantly reacts upon himself; he becomes the product of his deeds. Hence the appalling fact about life is not its moral indifference, but its moral inexorableness. There is truth in this; but not the whole truth. Against St Paul's oft-quoted statement: 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,' we must put an equally authoritative word: 'He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.' To say that what is done cannot be undone may be true. But it is not the last word of Nature, and certainly it is not the last word of grace. To affirm, for example, that Nature cannot, and never does, forgive, is to libel Nature. She not only forgives where she can, but is ever seeking to repair the injuries we do her.

¶ 'If a man,' says a writer, 'has broken a limb, with surgical assistance the limb is set, bound up, and not used for a time. And Nature at once begins to re-cement the ends. Then, according to the former habits of life, does Nature work: quicker if he has been a sensible man, slower if he has been a fool—*but all in the direction of forgiveness.*'

The same is true throughout the realm and working of Divine law. To say that we can never get back what we have once squandered in sin and folly is not to say that we can get nothing. The wish to get back in this sense may be as selfish as it would be immoral to gratify it. But the fact is that we may even get something higher than we have lost, if we prepare ourselves to receive. Those of us whose past is coming back as our enemy must turn to Him who alone can give us the forgiveness that carries with it the right to forgive ourselves. Our hope, from the foes of our own making, is in repentance; and he only repents who says: Let the consequences of my wrong-doing work themselves out according to a just law. I have but one desire—to know that I am at peace with God; one heart-wrought prayer, to realize that my will is reconciled to the holy will of God. Let a man say this, and mean it, and from that moment the laws of Nature and

the work of grace begin in him their marvellous change from death unto life.

¶ 'Whatever touches and ennobles us,' as Dr Martineau remarks, 'in the memories and experiences of the past, is a Divine birth out of sorrow, and pain, and failure.'

¶ The Past is plainly in one sense unalterable; it has happened, and to all Eternity it will have happened. But the value of the Past is not irrevocably fixed; it remains to be determined by the Future.[1]

Herod could not put back the head of the prophet, nor could action or repentance of his erase from the page of history the record of that cruel deed. No; but repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, might in him have wrought out in blessing to multitudes. He could not undo what he had done, but he might have used what he had done as an experience. The sorrow for it might have taken the sting out of the wound, and the wound itself might have been used for the healing of his nation. He might have sought to make some atonement for the evil he had done to one by making his contrition a means of good to many.

Emotion and Will

Mark vi. 20.—'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.'

Although Herod had shut up John in prison he still seems to have found pleasure in hearing him. It was always a new sensation for his exhausted nature to listen to this prophet whose ideas were so fresh and original and whose appeals moved him. Herod was a man of some ability, but it ran to seed in a passion for novelty and excitement. He was accustomed to deny himself no gratification. Just as at a later period he was keen to see Jesus, and even hoped he might see a miracle done by Him, so now he indulged himself with John. There was a time when he had feared John, 'knowing that he was a just man and an holy.' But he had heard him frequently since then, and when he heard him he did many things, but not the one thing needful, namely, give up his sin. As Herod listened his conscience was stirred, his emotions roused, but his will never grappled with his sin. Perhaps he prayed or wept or gave up something, or did some good deed, but in the centre of his life his sin lay untouched. So his character was marred beyond mending, and when the last test came he gave way finally.[1]

1. Religion may be enjoyed; it contains ideas, it is replete with mystery, and it can be preached with eloquence. A man may hear the Word gladly for the sake of the intellectual pleasure it affords and the interest of the preacher's personality, but unless he yields his heart and will to it, it is worse than useless.

It is not the emotions but the will that decides what we may become. The emotions may be frequently stirred, and good desires flash into flame, but if the will is not engaged we may positively fall in the moral scale. The danger in such cases is lest a condition of religious desire should come to be regarded as the equivalent of religious character, and thus induce a false sense of security. The fact is, until our emotions are taken up by the will and translated into their appropriate expression, until they are so acted on by the mental and moral forces as to become crystallized in some corresponding act and fact, they are of neither practical nor ethical worth. We sometimes hear it said of a person who shows deep sympathy in the presence of calamity, or a keen sense of outrage at the relation of some grievous wrong, that his sentiment does him credit. But does it? If what we have said be correct, then, before this fine sentiment can be placed to moral credit, it has so to set the will in motion that an intention is formed to alleviate the distress or redress the wrong. Here lies the peril of all appeals to the emotional nature. It is a course of action which affects the mind as alcohol affects the body. It is an artificial stimulant, always requiring the dose to be increased in order to produce the desired effect. There are 'tipplers' in the matter of emotionalism, just as there are tipplers in whisky. They are never happy unless they are in a simmer of sensation, which they seek to induce either by indulgence in literature which, under the plea of realism is as false to art as it is offensive to decency, or, what is worse, by indulging in the perilous pastime of creating for themselves exciting and morally dangerous situations in which they skirt the very brink of the abyss.

[1] W. Temple, *Mens Creatrix*, 172.

[1] James Denney.

The religious emotions are exposed to over-stimulation in a no less perilous manner, and with no less disastrous results. There are people who feed up their feelings on sensation after sensation, till they come to mistake the hysteria in which these excesses result for religious experience, instead of recognizing it as a morbid condition dangerous alike to heart and brain. Not quite so bad as these, but equally futile from a moral and religious point of view, is the case of those who, under the spell of old association, or touched into tenderness by some familiar tune, imagine that, because they are hushed into momentary reverence, or melted by a gracious memory into tears, they must necessarily be in a state of grace, when as a matter of fact they are simply creatures of sentiment, the proof of which will be seen in the fact that they show nothing lofty or pure or self-sacrificing in the daily walk of life and work.

¶ Dr Wayland Hoyt tells the story of a captain whom he met in the pilot-house of a Missouri River steamboat, and who asked his judgment concerning his conduct. He said that when he was a young man, and was first married, his wife was a Christian, and to please her he began to go to church; he never could hear singing and not be moved; the songs they sang in the church touched him strongly. They brought up forgotten memories and unloosed the springs of feeling; he was overcome. Because he wept, they thought he had become a Christian. His wife, the minister, and many friends pressed him to join the Church. 'But,' said the captain, 'I could not. I told them I had simply been stirred by songs as I always am. I knew I had not given up my evil ways.'

All such emotionalism is of no necessary moral value or significance, and the only way to give it such is to take it up into thought and purpose, where it can be disciplined into control, and directed to specific moral ends. Herod is a clear case of emotionalism minus morality. What with John the Baptist and conscience on the one hand, and Herodias and his guilty intrigue with her on the other, he was torn in twain. Had he but put his will into the scale of his good emotions, or taken his good desires up into his will and rendered them strong and virile, he might have redeemed the name of Herod from the treachery and violence, the lawlessness and lust, that had always been associated with the princes of the Idumean line. But all his fine emotions were consumed in the fires of a coarse and vulgar sensuality, so that he who had begun by hearing John gladly finished up by murdering him. So to-day men listen to the truth on Sunday and are stirred by noble impulses, but because they do not crystallize these fine feelings into some definite and morally committing act, they go out again on Monday to walk in the old way. To the very worst of men come the very best of moments, but because the moment merely comes to the man without the man coming to the moment, nothing in the way of a great purpose is born.

2. When Paul said, 'By manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' he meant that in the most degraded there was something that recognized and acknowledged as authoritative the moral challenge of goodness, wherever and whenever that goodness was presented or announced. This it is that distinguishes moral excellence from every other kind. If we go to see a great work of art, in which the painter or sculptor has expressed his uttermost sense of beauty in colour or form, the presentation does not convict us of sin or smite us with shame. We rejoice in its perfection. We are awed, it may be, into admiring wonder at the mind that thought, and the hand that wrought this marvel on canvas or in stone. But while it challenges our admiration, it does not send us away to weep in secret abashed and self-condemned, for the simple reason that such artistic excellence is no challenge to us. We are under no compulsion even to try, much less achieve. But it is quite otherwise, and always otherwise, with the beauty of moral character. It challenges not only our sense of beauty but our sense of duty. In the presence of the Supreme Personality, the altogether lovely, we become conscious of some strange compelling power bidding us not merely admire but emulate, or else stand self-condemned. We know it is not sufficient in such a case to feel; we are called upon to do. We answer to the pull of this moral attraction just as truly as steel answers to the pull of a magnet. We may wrap a needle round with fold after fold of enveloping and separating media, we may even lose it in the very heart of a bale of wool, but only let it be brought into the vicinity of an electro-magnet, and the power of

this mysterious attraction will pass by and through all obstructions, laying its invisible spell upon that tiny magnetic affinity and drawing the needle up to itself. Even so, though the human soul may have become so enmeshed in flesh and fleshly pursuits as humanly speaking to be lost, yet the moral magnetism of the universe as it stands expressed in the uplifted Christ will discover that hidden affinity and draw it upward to Himself. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth,' said Christ, 'will draw all men unto me'; and for us to be conscious of that magnetic pull and not respond to it is to live under the lash of perpetual self-rebuke. But to feel and answer and yield to its attraction is to pass from the reign and region of death and to thrill through all the pulses of our being with new and wondrous life.

The Baptist and Society

Mark vi. 27.—'And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head: and he went and beheaded him in the prison'—(R.V.).

John the Baptist had been laid hold of by Herod and cast into the gloomy prison of Machærus. Unlike the ordinary occupants of the cells, accustomed from earliest youth to the crowded streets of a stifling city, John was a son of the wilderness. The whole portrait of him suggests comparison with the Quaker preachers who went up and down among the fells of Cumberland in the seventeenth century. Men listened to his words as to the message of the stones and trees made vocal in human speech. His utterances were like the noise of the river as it rushed between the rocks. 'I am a voice,' so he had described both himself and his mission. His beard was unshorn, his clothing a shirt of camel's hair bound with a leathern thong. To such a being the story of his birth is entirely appropriate. We can picture that household in the highland village—the austere old priest, remote from the ordinary interests of the rural community, the mother, who had passed a childless prime, and the brooding boy, with his knowledge of the Bible and his distaste for the common pursuits, feeding his growing spirit amid the mountains where mists gather and storms break.

I think he had not heard of the far towns;
Nor of the deeds of men, nor of kings' crowns:
Before the thought of God took hold of him,
As he was sitting dreaming in the calm
Of one first noon, upon the desert's rim,
Beneath the tall fair shadows of the palm,
All overcome with some strange inward balm.

There are some men whose destiny it is, not to take their place in the web of history as part and parcel of the great fabric of human existence, but to break in upon the course of events, like a Greek chorus, with the voice of warning or approval, of blessing or judgment. Such was Melchisedek. And such was Elijah, whose weird figure appears from among the mountains of Gilead, and at length, when his mission is accomplished, is lost to human sight in the whirlwind and the fire. It was the spirit and power of Elijah that seemed to rest upon the head of the lonely, passionate figure. But no horses and chariot of fire were ready to bear John to the skies. The witness which provoked the hate of the adulterous Herodias was no less splendid than that which in the olden time had stirred the rage of the imperious Jezebel. But how different its sequel! The bold, uncompromising speech—'It is not lawful for thee to have her'—was the death-knell of him who uttered it. Henceforth nothing remained but the four walls of a dungeon.

¶ On the western strand of the Isle of Man are the ruins of Peel Castle, from the battlements of which on a clear day in summer the eye beholds a shining prospect of sky and hill and water. To the north lies the Mull of Galloway, to the west rise the mountains of Mourne. It is a scene which fills the heart with that thankful sense of the width and freedom of the universe which is the peculiar treasure of them that remain in the broad sea. But in the depths of the castle, beneath the floor of the romantic choir of St German's, where of old the island clergy offered to Nature's God their Eucharist of the sea, is a gloomy, vaulted chamber. In that grim crypt, stinted of both light and air, poor prisoners once eked out a drab, monotonous captivity. A sadder contrast it is wellnigh impossible to conceive.

There were weary days of waiting for the Baptist, as his imprisonment must have lasted a considerable time. Then we have the sordid story of the royal carousals; the Salome dance,

and the debt of honour incurred by the tipsy tetrarch. And so the voice was silenced, the lamp extinguished.

1. The Master said that among those who are born of women there was none greater than John the Baptist. The judgment of Jesus is its own certificate. But, short as is the story of his life, there are few figures that stand out more impressively from the pages of Scripture than that of the great preacher who nourished his spirit amid those witnesses of the eternal, which have neither speech nor language, though their voices are heard. He spoke to the earth, and the earth told him its secret; to the wind, and the spirit breathed upon him; to the universe, and the answer came straight from the loving heart of God. Could a finer preparation have been designed for the delivery of a message which was to try the lives of men and the laws of society in the unerring scales of Him to whom the false weights and the unjust balances of human selfishness are an abomination? It was always thus in the history of the Hebrews. When the Kingdom of God was about to come, when a new stage was reached in the development of the Eternal Purpose, it was always thus that the hearts of the disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just. The prophets needed what our own great interpreter of Nature's message has called 'fresh power to commune with the invisible world.' So John the Baptist holds no missions in the crowded lanes of Jerusalem. Bricks and mortar are no appropriate background for such a personality. Those who are tickled by incongruity would doubtless have provided crowded meetings for one whose object was not to declare eternal truth, but to fix attention on himself. But there is nothing dramatic in the asceticism of the Baptist. The power of his personality is its severe repression. He does no miracles. From the first he sees the waning of his own star. He will not be exploited as the coming man. It is the sheer force of the great message which draws the world after him. The carpenter leaves his bench, the shopkeeper closes his store, the tax-gatherer forsakes the place of toll, the soldier abandons the companionship of the mess. No class is unrepresented in the crowd which streams from the city gate. Even the haughty Pharisee and the superior Sadducee must mingle with the throng.

¶ The idea of our modern Home Mission movement is to carry the gospel to the people—to the lanes and courts of the city, to the miner's hut and the fisherman's resort, to the man on the street and the woman in the house—so that they cannot get away from it; and we speak fervently of our methods as aggressive. But it should not be forgotten that there is another method—the attractive. Speak the right word, and you will not need to press men to come and hear it. The spiritual instincts of human nature may be dormant, but they are not dead. Let the right music sound outside, and the hidden man of the heart will rise and come to the window to look out and listen. No obstacles can keep people away when a voice sufficiently charged with the Holy Ghost is heard. John had only to lift up his voice, and the entire country hastened to hear him.[1]

2. John became the herald of the Messiah because he had a true view of the Kingdom of God. His fidelity to the unchanging principles of God's moral government of the world, which he learned in his secret and solitary communion with Nature, and which stand in emphatic contrast to the ethical maxims of the market-place and the pavement, provoked the bitter hostility of the governing classes, and at the last left him the victim of a woman's vengeance. The Baptist was sacrificed as much to the malice of the Pharisees as to the resentment of the queen. The comfortable classes can afford to ignore the call to repentance as the vapouring of vulgar fanaticism, but for its practical issues. If the Baptist had only said to the publican, 'Extort no more than is appointed you,' to the soldier, 'Be content with your wages,' he would have won the applause of every substantial burgher, the sympathy of every cultured gentleman. But these exhortations, which gave no offence to the classes against which they were directed, of whom it is recorded that the common people heard him gladly, were but an interlude in the delivery of his message. It was the economic doctrine of the warning addressed to all alike that carried with it the scathing indictment of society, and stirred the malignant spirit of its leaders, whom the preacher feared not to denounce as 'a generation of vipers.'

Think of it! There were symptoms of a wide unsettlement, the mutterings of a profound dis-

[1] James Stalker.

content, in the heart of that ancient community, which is not without its parallel in modern times. Was this the moment for any who called himself a prophet to mingle with his summons to repentance inflammatory discourse like that which was flung broadcast in the disorderly utterances of John? 'He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.' These are the fruits of repentance, which are required of all alike. God is about to establish a new nation, a new kingdom, founded upon a higher, broader, purer expression in human life and intercourse of the righteousness and love of the eternal Father. Whether we will have the place in it which God designs for us will depend, not on our blind adhesion to the ideals of the past, but upon our power to behold the ampler vision of the future.

We are told to-day in magazines and newspapers that private property is the foundation of civilized society. Are we sure of that? Are we sure that John the Baptist was not proclaiming a deeper principle, and that a community shall not yet arise in which it will be taken as an axiom, as a fundamental article of its constitution, that he that hath two coats shall give to him that hath none? Is the ancient *lex talionis* ('an eye for an eye') the highest expression of the eternal Justice? Or did Christ admit us to a larger vision of God when He bade men imitate the perfection of the Father who makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good? In the last resort can any civilization claim the title of Christian which does not take as its guiding principle the amazing love of the Cross?

Breathing Spaces

Mark vi. 31.—'And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.'

This must have been a very welcome invitation to the disciples. They were tired men; continuous teaching had taken a good deal out of them, and they needed rest and reinforcement. They were sorrowful men, too; for John the Baptist had just been cruelly murdered by Herod, and the whole company were feeling the sadness of the occasion and the strain of the troubled time. It was a season of political unrest also, for there was a popular ferment afoot against Herod as the instigator of the vile crime; and quiet spiritual work has not much opportunity and cannot make much progress when the political passions of the populace are aroused. It was therefore a most appropriate time for withdrawment and rest, and the disciples would hear Christ's kindly words with a sigh of relief.

We sometimes cherish a one-sided, incomplete notion of Christianity. We think of it as making continuous appeals to our sense of duty, constant claims upon our moral nature, seeking to rouse, stimulate, awaken, encourage; it is the clarion call to the highest service and endeavour. The gospel is certainly that, but it is not only that. Men cannot bear more than a certain amount of strain. If body or brain be taxed beyond its strength a breakdown is inevitable. The gospel is not always crying, Arise, shine; put on your strength. Like a wise mother it sometimes says, Lie down, poor child, and take your rest. We hear a great deal now about the 'strenuous life'; but we are not often offered a sensible recipe for it. The strenuous life with so many people means a fussy life, tremendous activity, bustling, feverish excitement—a programme with no intervals. No wonder the modern man is so often a bundle of quivering nerves. He tries to keep up the pace, and finds he is not equal to the strain. Christ is more considerate to workers than they are to themselves. He goes on the principle that prevention is better than cure. The gospel story is full of beautiful instances of Christ's care and consideration for men's physical needs. What an exquisite touch of tender sympathy is that where He has compassion on the multitudes, and says to the disciples, 'Give ye them to eat; bid them sit down upon the green grass; lest they faint by the way, for some of them have come from far.' Lest they faint by the way! He would prevent a breakdown; he would forestall disaster. Is this the way to deepen the spiritual life? Certainly, for the spiritual life itself has a physical basis, and no man is necessarily made more spiritual by becoming an invalid. Body and mind are so closely related, and when one gets run down the other often collapses out of sheer sympathy. Let us live the strenuous life by all means, but let us live it sanely; and we cannot live it sanely unless we take our intervals of repose, our seasons of rest, our times of recuperation and refreshment.

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All kinds of labour need occasional recreation and relaxation. The secret of true success is to know what you can do and what you cannot do, and to work well within your strength. Some work by the sweat of the brow, some by the sorer sweat of the brain, and some by the sweat of the heart, which is the sorest sweat of all. If men and women are over-driven in any department of life, we must, in the name of Christ, seek to ameliorate their lot, and to create such conditions as will enable them to realize the ideal of a sound mind in a sound body. In these days of mechanical labour we must see that men and women do not themselves become machines. We talk about the dignity of labour, and the pride and pleasure of the workman in his work; and indeed, if it were his own handiwork, with the directing force of personality behind it, there would be sense and reason in our maxims. The sheer monotony of such toil is deadening and wearying, and the mechanical nature of it renders intervals of self-realization of the utmost necessity and importance.

1. 'Come ye apart.' There is a value in occasional withdrawment. We must have these breathing spaces if we want to strengthen our bodies, stimulate our minds, and prolong our usefulness. Let us emphasize that word 'apart.' What we want by way of relaxation and reinforcement is something completely apart from our ordinary work, something absolutely different, something that takes us right out of our groove and exercises another side of our nature. Some parts of our being never seem to come into play at all; they are all locked rooms whose doors are never opened and whose thresholds are never crossed. Yet they contain much that is interesting, beautiful, and valuable; and the outlook from their windows will disclose a richer and wider landscape. Have a hobby of some kind. The holiday time ought not to be a time of pure laziness; it will be all the brighter and better and more bracing for the introduction of some intellectual element. The open air offers endless opportunities for the observer. The flowers, the rocks, the birds, the seashore, the mountain side, the leafy wood, all have something to say to the alert mind and responsive heart. And many find a rare pleasure in watching the sky and the marvellous and ever-changing configurations of the clouds in the great wide spaces, the open expanse of heaven. It will be impossible for us to be little, mean, petty, censorious, if we can only get the sky into our souls.

¶ Perhaps the very happiest of all holiday-makers is the man who has some favourite hobby, for his hobby has this happy power about it, that it makes him forget for the time the whole world of things outside of itself. Be it shooting, or fishing, or botanizing, or geologizing, or cycling, or motoring, or catching moths, or inspecting cathedrals—if only it is the man's hobby, how happy he is, and how his hobby absorbs him! One of the most delightful holidays I ever enjoyed was spent as sole companion to a friend of mine who was riding a hobby of which I could not so much as hold the bridle. But so happy did his hobby make him, and through him me, that I look back to those days in Central France as almost my very best holiday.[1]

2. Let us emphasize the words 'into a desert place.' By that is meant some place where the valuable and rare luxury of quietness can be had, some place where there is no fear of being interrupted or disturbed. It is a most happy experience to go now and then to a spot where you know nobody and nobody knows you, and where you are even beyond the reach of letters and newspapers, and telegrams—those bomb-shells of civilization. There is a ministry of solitude, if you can only find it. Solitude is not necessarily isolation. The silences and solitudes of Nature are grateful and healing to a tired or worried or sorrowful man; but there is a solitude of the crowd which is almost equally precious. There are few things more curiously stimulating to the imagination than to walk through a town you have never been in before, where every face is strange and the very dialect is different. It is a desert place to you—and yet how much there is to read there in the strange faces, the unknown houses, the unfamiliar streets. God has set fountains of singular freshness and inspiration in desert places. When we are half-paralysed by routine, deadened with the familiar and the commonplace, we may often regain our life and restock our brain with ideas through contact with the unfamiliar, the novel, the strange.

[1] Alexander Whyte.

3. Observe that Christ does not say, 'Go ye,' but 'Come ye': He is not sending them away, He is going with them; the fellowship is not to be broken up. And what an unspeakable value there is in such unrestrained, frank, free fellowships, where one can speak one's real thought without fear of misunderstanding. There is a morality of holidays; and a large part of it consists in congenial companionship. Don't leave Christ behind; whatever we are apart from, we must not be apart from Him. The landscape will have a richer colour, the hobby a more radiant interest, the fellowship a higher tone, the conversation a sweeter accent, the laughter a more wholesome ring, if we are with Him; for Christ's presence in the heart elevates and sweetens all things.

¶ People neglect things in holidays that they would never neglect at other times, go to places that at home they would never attend, do things that at home they would never do. It was said of Emerson that he had a short creed, but 'he always took it with him.' That is what we must all do with our creed—take it everywhere, and not least into our holidays. The sovereignty of Jesus covers all our life, and He is the best companion everywhere.[1]

4. And, then, notice the qualifying term, 'rest a while.' It is not a giving up of the work to which the disciples are invited; it is a preparation for more toil. It is not an abandonment of our tasks, but a reinforcement of our strength for larger service. A life all holiday would be as monotonous and depleting as a life all work. Even the purest delight may pall; even the pleasantest confection may cloy and sicken; there is even a monotony of sunshine and cloudless blue.

¶ Nothing is so insupportable to man as to be completely idle. For he then feels all his nothingness, all his loneliness, all his insufficiency, all his weakness, all his emptiness. At once in his idleness, and from the deeps of his soul, there will arise weariness, gloom, sadness, vexation, disappointment, despair.[2]

We need enough rest to give us a zest for returning labour. And be sure of it—we shall enjoy our rest the more if we have done something to earn it and deserve it. The worker comes back to his work with something more than the tan upon his cheek and a fresh spring in his step; he returns with a mind braced with the aid of pure and lofty thought, with a heart full of happy memories and sweet content, and with an earnest purpose to spend and be spent in the service of the Son of Man.

Sweet is the pleasure
Itself cannot spoil!
Is not true leisure
One with true toil?
That thou wouldst taste it,
Still do thy best;
Use it, not waste it—
Else 'tis no rest.

Sweet is the pleasure
Itself cannot spoil!
Is not true leisure
One with true toil?
'Tis loving and serving
The highest and best:
'Tis onwards, unswerving!—
And that is true rest.[1]

[1] G. B. Austin. [2] Pascal.

The Compassion of Jesus

Mark vi. 34.—'And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them.'

Nothing is more interesting than a crowd. And how differently it affects people. Some are amused by it, some disgusted, some entertained, some wearied. The writer of this Gospel tells us how Jesus felt toward a crowd. The words have all the marks of an eyewitness who had watched the Master when He was surrounded by a throng, and found His face more fascinating than the multitude. Jesus looked upon a crowd, not with indifference, not with contempt, not with mere curiosity, but with an exquisite and moving compassion. He saw the joys of men and women, their follies, their ways and habits, as His parables reveal. We talk of the crowd, but there are no indistinguishable masses of men in the thought of God. He sees every man, woman, and little child as an individual pupil in His school of life. There are no strangers to the heart of God, no outcasts from His mercy. We make a mistake when we lump together the ways of God with men under one vast word, Providence; we should use a more personal word, as Jesus did, confident that He loves each

[1] J. S. Dwight.

one with a love founded on a knowledge that embraces all that live.

¶ Lord Grey of Fallodon describes how, one long summer's day in 1910, he walked with Theodore Roosevelt down the valley of the Itchen and through the New Forest, in order that the famous American might learn the songs of British birds by listening to them. He knew all about the birds themselves, their habits and appearance, and he was eager to crown his knowledge by hearing them sing. 'He had one of the most perfectly trained ears for bird songs that I have ever known,' Lord Grey says, 'so that if three or four birds were singing together he would pick out their songs, distinguish each, and ask to be told each separate name.' [1]

1. 'Jesus saw, and was moved with compassion.' His pity sprang from His perception. How often Jesus spoke of people who, though they had eyes to see, did not *perceive*. The fact is, vision is not a faculty of the physical organ of sight solely. What a man sees depends not simply on his eye, but on his mind, his imagination, his heart. A man may have eyes, sound and perfect in every particular, but unless he has also an imagination and a heart to look out through those eyes, he will not perceive. How is it, for instance, that to some people, as Mrs Barrett Browning puts it, 'earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God,' while the rest see no gleam of fire in the bush, but simply sit round it and pluck blackberries?

Now the secret of our Lord's vision was this: He looked out upon the world with imagination and a perfect sympathy. He not only *saw*, He *perceived*. If it were true that every one blest with two sound eyes saw alike, then the sight of the crowd ought to have produced the same impression upon all who saw it. The twelve disciples were with Jesus at this time; but we do not read that any one of them was 'moved with compassion.' We read it only of Jesus, because, in the deepest sense of all, He was the only one who saw the crowd. The rest saw heads, faces, bodies. They saw the numbers of people who gathered round their Lord, and their feeling was one of elation. In these thronging multitudes they saw new recruits for their Master's cause. A growing army—that was what the disciples saw, and they rejoiced. A multitude of men and women bowed down beneath burdens of care and sorrow and sin—that was what Jesus saw, and He was stirred to a passion of pity for them. The old Book says that 'every heart knoweth its own bitterness.' And every heart, well-nigh, has its bitterness. Business troubles, blighted affections, bereavement, the sorrow and shame caused by sin—they are represented in every crowd. The vision of it all in its naked horror would be more than flesh and blood could bear. It is in mercy that God has, in part at any rate, veiled it from our eyes. But Jesus 'saw the multitudes,' and when He saw He 'was moved with compassion.'

¶ Ibsen, the Norwegian dramatist, was counselled to seclude himself and to find his inspiration in an arbour of roses. But he said, 'No, when I wish to feel what life is to men and women, I go down among the masses, I walk the streets of the city, and I realize their need and sorrow, their love and struggle.' [1]

2. Now, compassion lies at the root of all noble religion, the pity of God for man and of man for man. The chapters of the Koran, all of them, begin with the words: 'In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.' The religion of Buddha numbers five hundred million votaries, and pity is the keynote of it all—pity for man bound to the Wheel of Life, distracted by desire, restless, unhappy. More than sympathy, more than pity, compassion enters into the very soul of humanity, feels what it feels, knows its strivings, its perplexities, and understands while it blesses; understands not only the facts but the causes. It is love at its highest, its deepest, its purest, as Balzac has shown in *The Alchemist*. There is, however, a deep difference between Jesus and Buddha. If Buddha pitied men because they live tormented by the fever of desires that can never be realized—and vain when realized—Jesus was moved with compassion because they do not really live. Life to Jesus was so wonderful, so deep, so full of Divine meanings, and withal so close at hand, that He pitied the blindness that did not see it and the sin that defiled it. The people thronged about Him with their hungry hearts, their bewildered minds, their sorrows, their weariness, their life-sapping diseases, and His heart went out in a tide of pity. Da Vinci has shown

[1] A. Smellie, *Sunset Glory*, 127.

[1] W. M. Clow.

us a Christ too much burdened by His own tragedy; but when the perfect artist has come, he will portray a sympathizing Christ, a ministering Christ.

With us compassion is so helpless, but not so the compassion of Christ. It is creative. Deeper than sin, deeper than its deadening power, He saw something Divine in every man, something struggling upwards, seeking the sunlight; and that precious thing He sought to reach—willing to forgive anything if only He could touch it to new life and hope. So He sees us still, sees that in the man of which the man himself is unconscious, or only vaguely aware; sees us as heirs of a life which is not yet ours—dreams of us as we are to be, imputes to us a beauty not yet our own. And thus, by His compassion, He creates within us a new spirit, which blossoms in new desires and aims and endeavours, and works out our salvation with us, both to will and to do. Down to the lowest depths His compassion goes, feeling the misery of sin even when the sinner does not feel it, knowing how it came to be, through some defect of will, some heat of passion, some desire perverted by self-will, some dullness of soul; knows it all and makes it His cross until we are redeemed from it.

¶ Some students and nurses were gathered one day in the ward of a great French hospital. At the far end of the ward lay a fine boy dying of cancer—cancer between the eyes. It was before the age of anæsthetics, and little or nothing could be done to alleviate his anguish. By the bedside of the boy sat a stately old man, holding with one hand the two small ones of the suffering child, whilst, with the other hand, he caressingly smoothed back his hair. '*Ah, je souffre tout!*' moaned the boy; and the old man, listening to every sigh, promised to devise some relief. He rose to go, but, before leaving the sufferer, he bent down, and, brushing back the curls, kissed him affectionately on the forehead. The white-haired doctor was the renowned Nelaton, the greatest surgeon of his time! And, as they watched the old man's reverent tenderness, those students and nurses at the other end of the ward detected the secret of his great success. *He felt!* And, because he felt so deeply for his patients in their pain, he was always cogitating some scheme for their relief.[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Fiery Crags*, 124.

3. Surely in this compassion we have something absolutely Divine. This universal care and tenderness inevitably send us back upon that God who created natural affection. Those eyes that thus search the world, that search history, and discover the souls of countless insignificant individuals, and bring them out into the light of love—surely such scrutiny is beyond the range of human vision. The longer we consider it, the more we think of the all-seeing eye of God. There is no question that an increasing compassion for the multitude and an increasing conscience of their well-being have come upon man through Jesus Christ, and it would be difficult to find anything more expressly revealing the image of the Father. Until Christ came the love of humanity was no more than a theoretical and high-sounding subject for dialectic or for dream. It was He who changed it into an actual force in the world, and set its strong leaven working in the race. Such compassion is a revelation of God, whose mercy endureth for ever.

¶ There is a famous painting by a Flemish artist, Leomprels, entitled 'Humanity and Destiny,' in which we are shown the human multitudes with hands uplifted—some knotted with toil, some bejewelled, some emaciated with ill-health, old hands blue-veined and trembling, hands young and strong, some uplifted in prayer, lovers' hands clasped, mothers lifting the chubby hands of children, seeking blessings. And when we look up to where the hands are reaching we see a benign Face in the sky, from which radiates the light that warms and blesses. It is the face of God, the Father of men, whose compassion never faileth.

¶ Pity is the quality which most deeply touches man, because it the most resembles God. How wonderful is the pity of Shakespeare, a pity that reaches beyond man and touches Nature! It fills with its flood of light the whole expanse of his works, and is perhaps what makes them so living and healing. Even the characters that least deserve it receive it without stint, because it is the very spirit of his genius. At last all rancour is obliterated, all sin forgiven. The last word which hovers over the final chord of his symphony is that of the luminous Spirit of the Air, with which Ariel inspires Prospero:

> The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance.

Here is the token of true greatness of soul. As Emerson said of Lincoln, 'his heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it for the memory of a wrong.' Such words make real to us the magnanimity and compassion of Jesus, which reached its highest glory in that sublimest of all prayers which embraced His enemies: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'[1]

4. If we are followers of this Christ who had a perfect passion for helping, healing, saving, we must be compassionate one to another. There was no single ill under which men suffer that Jesus did not suffer with them. Physical want and need never failed to appeal to Him. He cared not only for men's spiritual condition, but also for the external circumstances under which they lived. He came to preach good tidings to the poor. To reduce Christianity to a sort of programme of social reform is a grave error, but the fact that millions of our own countrymen are living on the poverty line is our concern. The fact that children grow up in our midst who are sent forth into life crippled and maimed because not adequately fed and clothed —that also is our concern. Pain and loss are more tragic evils than poverty, and our Lord was stirred to a still profounder pity for the suffering and the sorrowful. And whosoever would be Christlike must have compassion on every wounded man he comes across along life's way. But what roused Christ's compassion most of all was the havoc wrought by sin. Sin menaces the immortal soul; poverty and pain for the most part affect only the body. But one of the most astonishing facts of our modern situation is that men and women have become sensitive about poverty and pain, but careless and indifferent about sin. We are more affected by sickness of body than we are by sickness of soul. We see the external mischief, we do not see the deadly secret hurt. We are callous and unconcerned because we do not see as Jesus saw. If we did, we would share His work and be willing to become all things to all men, if by any means we might save some.

¶ Here are the words Myers puts into the lips of St Paul.

Only like souls I see the folk thereunder,
Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,—
Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,
Sadly contented in a show of things;—

Then with a rush the intolerable craving
Shivers throughout me like a trumpet-call,—
Oh to save these! to perish for their saving,
Die for their life, be offered for them all!

[1] J. F. Newton, *The Sword of the Spirit*, 133.

The Multitude Fed

Mark vi. 37.—'Give ye them to eat.'
John vi. 35.—'I am the bread of life.'

THE Feeding of the Five Thousand is in some ways the most difficult of our Lord's works for us to grasp. What was the motive of the miracle? It does not seem to have been urgently called for by the necessities of the multitude. There were villages nearby where, as the disciples suggested, the people could buy for themselves. Why, then, did our Lord perform it, when He was usually a severe economist in the exercise of His miraculous power? Dr A. B. Bruce suggests what seems to be the right answer. The real explanation of the miracle is to be found in the great discourse on the bread of life that in the Fourth Gospel succeeds it. It is St John who lets us see a little behind the scenes. He shows us the multitude rushing to make Christ a King. He shows us our Lord refusing to accept a kingship according to the popular fancy. He shows us a new emphasis on the spiritual side of Christ's mission—a deliberate challenge on His part to His hearers not to seek 'the meat that perisheth,' but 'that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.' He stands in the midst of the same disciples, and of the crowd, many of them hostile and yet all seeking Him, and He says to them 'I am the bread of life.' And in that word He makes this claim—that He is the sustainer and the satisfier of the deepest thing in all human life; that, if a man can but find Him or, to use the figurative term, 'feed upon Him,' possess Him, that man has found the sustenance of his deepest and his essential life.

1. As far as possible let us get away from the mere figurative language, and ask this simple question: 'What does Christ do for man?' He brings man to God, He brings man to himself, and He brings man to the place of victory.

(1) First, He brings man to God. For a

moment read out of that statement the more ordinary evangelical meaning and take it not as a theory but as an experience. This Christ who stood confronting the multitudes abides through every century the same living One. What effect does He produce upon the heart of the man who honestly, without prejudice and without theory, comes into personal and living contact with Him? He first brings that man to the certainty of God, to the knowledge of God, to a personal and intimate fellowship with God. He has brought us to the certainty of God from the awful mystery of a God growing with the years before our imagination as we have come to know more of the vastness of the universe. We know God through Him, not with the perfection of knowledge, but with an intimacy that no man can ever dissuade us from believing in, and we know what it is to have fellowship with God in Him. This He has done for the saints in all the ages. This He has done for men of all languages and races and colours. He has brought them to the Father, and they have found by His revelation the very God for whom they sought in other ways and never found ultimately or to the profound satisfaction of their lives save through Himself.

¶ 'Jesus,' says Dr Cairns, 'passed by the grand classical speech of religion, which was fast becoming a dead language, and took up the dialect of the human heart, and at His summons, and by the transfiguring power of His personality, the name of Father became pure and great enough to describe the inmost nature of the Eternal One.'

¶ Centuries ago, when the Riccardi Palace was erected in Florence, a room was set apart for a chapel, and Benazzo Gozzali, a famous artist, adorned its walls and ceilings with beautiful frescoes. The artist was compelled to paint by the yellow light of a lamp, and through many years, by the same dim and flickering guide, worshippers strained their eyes to see the bright wings of angels and the roses of celestial gardens. At length the wall was pierced, the picture above the high altar was removed, and in its place the pure rays of the sun streamed in, revealing the varied and vivid colours and the beauty of line and shadow so long hidden.

Like the Florentine chapel, the supreme beauty of God remained hidden from human gaze until the Sun of Righteousness arose in radiant and revealing light over the hills of the world and the Galilean said: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' [1]

(2) In the second place, He has brought man to a knowledge of himself. He brings us first of all to a knowledge of what we really are in the potentialities of our lives. He explains to us the meaning and the mystery of our own being. And there is no greater mystery than ourselves to ourselves, this 'I' that we cannot understand. But Christ has revealed the ideal humanity. We see in Him what was meant according to the ancient writing when in the counsels of God He said, 'Let us make man.' With the Psalmist we ask, 'What is man?' and there is but one answer that perfectly satisfies us and completely holds us. That answer is, Christ Himself. He is the man, the ideal man.

¶ The missions of the Christian Church are proving surely, even if more slowly than we had hoped, how men of all races, from the veriest savages to the oldest civilizations, are able to find in Jesus an ideal higher than their highest, a glimpse of their true selves that wins and draws their hearts. 'Over against all false and meagre ideals of man's capacity and destiny,' Dr Gore says, 'He represents the great reality.' [2]

(3) But in the moment in which Christ brings me to the knowledge of myself, in that same moment He brings me to the knowledge of the actual, which is absolutely out of harmony with the ideal. Whether I listen to His ethic on the Mount of Beatitudes, or whether I behold the perfection of His humanity upon the Mount of Transfiguration, I see what I am. In the purpose and the economy of God I am a potential Christ. But I am paralysed; I see it, but I cannot attain unto it. If that is the ultimate meaning of my humanity, then I am in very deed a failure somehow. But that is not all He does. He creates in the heart of every man who comes face to face with Him a passionate desire to escape from that which is a failure and to enter upon that which is the ideal. And, further, He brings this man in whose heart was the agony that found apostolic expression in the words, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me,' by a way that he can never fully understand. He gives him a sense of the forgiveness of sins, He gives him a sense within his own heart of power over sin. That is the

[1] H. D. M'Keehan, *The Patrimony of Life*, 74.
[2] J. M. E. Ross, *The Self-Portraiture of Jesus*, 231.

central wonder of the Christian evangel, that is the supreme evidence of the Deity of the Lord Christ. He said, 'I am the bread of life.'

What hath man done that man may not undo,
Since God to man hath grown so near akin?
Did his foe slay him? He shall slay his foe.
Hath he lost all? He all again shall win.
Is sin his master? He shall master sin.

2. What of the hunger of the multitude? Let us get away back historically behind the Christian era, and when we do that what do we find? Take the condition of the world from the highest and noblest known—Hebraism and Hellenism. If we take Hebraism, being patient with its kindergarten methods, and take the central note out of it, it was this: 'Man, know God!' And if we take the central note out of Hellenism, what was it? 'Man, know thyself!' Take the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, and in the Book of Job we find Eliphaz preaching a wonderful sermon, and in it this was the central word, 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.' And though Job was angry with the preacher, yet a little later the same great truth was expressed when he said, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' And all through the Hebrew economy we have this central message, 'Know God, find God.' Equally true is it that the message of Hellenism was 'Know thyself.' The great Greek ideal was that of the culture of the individual, the perfecting of the form physically, and of the mind, the coming into possession of his own on the part of man. Why go back to these things? Because these were the highest needs; prior to the coming of Christ they expressed most perfectly the real hunger of humanity, a hunger after God and after the finding of itself. Let us leap the centuries, and come to our own day. Here, too, if we have the ear to listen to the deepest and miss the accidental, we find man is seeking God, and at the same time he is seeking himself. This is the meaning of this age of physical culture and mental development; this is the meaning of an age in which men are taking to socialism. They have had a dream, and it is the passion of man to find himself, and his larger self, in relationship to his brother man and to the world. It is the great hunger of humanity.

And now Christ says, 'I am the bread of life.' Perhaps the most familiar words of all that ever fell from the Saviour's lips are 'Come unto me;' but we ought to begin a little further back, where Jesus began. 'No man knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

3. In the light of this miracle what is our responsibility? Do we not find it in the words 'Give ye them to eat'? So the incident is not the happening of a moment, but the ministry of the ages. One can believe that our Lord had more motives than one in doing this thing, one of His motives being to teach His disciples, on the threshold of their lifelong ministry, what vast resources they had in Himself. 'Give ye them to eat,' He was indeed saying to those men, not merely of one crowd beside the Lake, but of hungry nations ranged rank on rank from Jerusalem and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth. He is laying upon the Church the responsibility for the world. Is He not saying it to His servants still? Has not His Church discovered from that day to this how much it takes to keep her life going, and how gloriously adequate her Lord is to the task? Can He take the poor powers of His servants, and multiply them, by adding to them Himself, till they accomplish things at which they themselves are astonished? These things happen. And when they happen we see again the authentic gesture of the Galilean fields. As Thomas Toke Lynch puts it:

'Twas springtime when He blest the bread,
And harvest when He brake.

¶ Bunyan wrote thus of one of his books: 'I did carry my meditations to the Lord Jesus for a blessing, which He did forthwith grant according to His grace; and helping me to set before my brethren, we did all eat and were well-refreshed, and behold also that while I was in the distributing of it, it so increased in my hand, that of the fragments that we left, after we had well dined, I gathered up this basketful.'[1]

[1] Brown's *John Bunyan*, 171.

Unrealized Possibilities

Mark vi. 38.—'How many loaves have ye? go and see.'

THE disciples were staggered by the disproportion between their own meagre resources and the world's need as represented by that hungry multitude. They were staggered because they did not dream of the unrealized possibilities on that hillside. The feeding of the multitude does not stand in the ordinary categories of cause and effect. Jesus Christ Himself at the centre of that scene does not stand in those ordinary categories. He is the everlasting miracle. His spiritual energy working in the hearts of men, lifting off the sense of guilt, renewing the springs of action, causing the weak will to rejoice in new-found strength, causes men every day in the year to say, 'We never saw it on this fashion.'

What is of most interest to us in this narrative is what it symbolizes, in that aspect of it which can be re-enacted anywhere in terms of present-day experience. How much knowledge have we, as we face the world of spiritual reality and undertake to instruct our fellows? How much faith have we, as we undertake to press forward in some bewildering situation or try to point the way for some other baffled soul? How much money have we, as we look out upon the unrelieved need? How much goodness have we, as we take our place beside Him who is intent upon taking away the sin of the world? Not much, we must report. Just this! And what is this in the face of the task which confronts us? Some of us are disturbed by vague longings for what has never been ours. We want a more complete physical effectiveness, not for self-indulgence but for unselfish service. We want a more complete mental unfolding, for we feel stirring within us an unrealized capacity for high and serious thought. We long for a soul purer, truer, kinder than this troubled soul of ours which comes forth weary and discouraged from the fret and care of many a hard week. We long for all this, and then, looking at our own meagre resources, we feel dismayed.

1. First of all, what were those five loaves among so many? The Master was the only one who knew. How amazed the disciples must have been when they saw their little store of provisions used as the basis for a Divine bounty magnificent in its results. They never dreamed that such a thing was possible. How astonished many a man is when he sees his own modest store of ability used in a wonderful way for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. He goes along, a kind word here, a generous deed there, a certain character for rectitude taken and held, an attitude of sympathy truly Christian maintained in the presence of the world's pain—and no end of good is accomplished as the years come and go. The man can scarcely realize that he has been so used to help and bless other lives. 'What am I!' he said at the beginning of his Christian life. He did not know. No one knew save He who creates every man with unsuspected powers of usefulness.

¶ Whittier, in his appreciation of Woolman, begins by saying this: 'Nothing is more difficult of explanation by those who look upon the surface, than the strength of moral influence often exerted by humble and uneventful lives. Some great reform which shakes the world takes place before our eyes, some mighty change for which the ages have been waiting; and when we trace the secret we are often surprised to find the initial link in the chain of causes to be some humble individual, the Divine commission of whose life was hardly understood by his contemporaries, not even by himself. The little one has become a thousand. And the only explanation is that through the humble instrument, the Divine power was manifested.'

¶ When Paganini appeared for the first time at the Royal Opera House in Paris, the aristocracy of France was gathered to hear him. In his peculiar ghostly manner he glided on to the stage amidst the breathless silence of the expectant throng. Commencing to tune his violin, a string snapped. The audience tittered. Commencing again, a second string broke; and, a moment later, a third gave way. The people stared in consternation. Paganini paused for just a second, and then, giving one of his grim smiles, he lifted his instrument, and, from the single string, drew music that seemed almost divine.[1]

How reassuring this story is when we stand amazed at the disproportion between the efforts we can put forth and the magnitude of our task. Here is the everlasting struggle between the forces of light and darkness. Here is a missionary set down in China, India, Africa, facing the

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Nest of Spears*, 151.

ignorance, prejudice, animalism of a hundred thousand people who walk in darkness—what is he among so many? Here is the unorganized moral sentiment of some community, fighting some entrenched evil with strong political pull. What can public sentiment do against that? How unequal the contest seems in every case. Five small loaves looking into the mouths of five thousand hungry men seems a fit illustration. And yet on all the mission fields, and in those sections of our cities where the forces of righteousness stand in the very thick of the fight, devoted men and women are coming off more than conquerors through Him who uses the weak things to confound the mighty.

2. In the second place, Jesus made His answer only when the resources were brought forward in willing consecration. From the beginning it seems to have been God's way to require some basis upon which to rest His bounty. Give Him the dust of the ground, whatever that may mean, and He will breathe into it the breath of His own mighty life until a living soul wears His likeness and image. Give Him that obedient trust which feels its way along the street that it may wash in the pool of Siloam, and He will cause blind eyes to see. Give Him five loaves and two small fishes and He will feed the multitude. Some basis of consecrated resource, slender though it be, He does require. Then, by supplementing it with His own gracious power, He makes the result glorious.

'How much faith have you?' He asks some doubting, uncertain soul. 'Not much,' we say. Perhaps we only believe in God and in duty. This is meagre indeed! It scarcely equals the five loaves and two fishes in their realm. But we need not wait or send out to increase our store! Let us bring to Him those dim, uncertain confidences, those fragments of aspiration, those ill-defined yearnings for a life holier and more complete, those undeveloped capacities for the wider service we might render. Put them utterly into His great hands and become His disciple. We shall then have done our part—the responsibility for the outcome will rest with Him. How splendid it is that we are never required to believe what at present we can not believe, or to do what we are unable to do, or to be what we are not! We are only required to bring forward such loaves and fishes as we have and put them unreservedly into the service of the highest we see. The man with one talent is not censured because he does not bring five; he is censured only where he hides and does not use the power he has. This simplifies the whole matter and makes the path of duty plain. As we live in the spirit of Christian devotion our life will unfold in faith, in hope, and in love until men will say of our Master, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'

¶ While he was at Harvard University Phillips Brooks was not a leader in any way. When he graduated he had not united with the Church, and he had no profession in view. He took up school teaching as a temporary means of livelihood, and he failed. What should he do now? He had certain powers of imagination and of composition. He was loved by the men who knew him, and he was respected too. There came to him at this time a resolution. He deliberately, fully, and irrevocably consecrated his life to God. What happened? The powers of his life began to expand, irradiate, and grow dominant. He who could not speak at college became one of the greatest preachers of the ages. He who failed to control a classroom of boys developed such powerful influence over all ranks and ages of life that whether speaking to a crowded gathering of plainest people in a public hall or preaching to the students of a university he grew to be the most forceful leader among men of his time.[1]

3. Again, the final account is not yet. 'What are these five loaves among so many?' the disciples asked. Presently they saw a hungry multitude satisfied from that slender resource. But that was only the first chapter in God's reply. Jesus took this incident as a text, and He preached the people a sermon the world will never forget. 'I am the living bread. When men find their satisfaction in Me, in the sense of personal fellowship with Me, in My mode of life and service, they never hunger. It satisfies; it strengthens; it enlarges them. This is the bread that a man may eat and not die.'

And that was only the second chapter in God's answer to the question, 'What are these?' The disciples in turn went out and preached Christ everywhere as the bread of life. In a satisfying vision of God, in the reinterpretation

[1] J. G. K. M'Clure, *Supreme Things*, 80.

of human life in the terms of His own life, in the uncovering of an adequate source of motive and stimulus, in the renewal of the heart by the grace He offers, men have found Him indeed 'the bread of life.' And the moral needs of millions of men, black, white, red, yellow, and brown, have been met from the contents of this mighty message of help which came down from heaven to give life unto the world.

And so the story is carried far and wide, receiving fresh interpretation and illustration as it meets the spiritual needs of added thousands. You cannot set a limit to the good accomplished.

Communion with God

Mark vi. 46.—'He departed into a mountain to pray.'

WHAT we have recorded of Christ in the text is in keeping with His uniform practice. There never was a busier life than His. The broad impression which the Gospels give of the ministry of Christ is that of unhasting and unresting activity. And yet, at the back of all that activity there are constantly recurring hints of His going away to be alone, and of seasons spent in the solitude of the wilderness or amid the stillness of night on the top of some mountain. Again and again we have such incidental notices given us as 'It came to pass he was alone and prayed,' 'He went by himself alone,' 'He remained all night alone in prayer.'

What special circumstances were they which made our Lord seek the ministry of solitude and prayer?

1. Very often it was in *times of crises*, when some great decision had to be made. 'It came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.' And why? 'When it was day he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve.' Here is the connection—a whole night spent in mountain solitude alone with the Father before making a great choice in the selection of twelve disciples. He went apart into a solitary place that He might mingle His spirit in communion with His Father, and so perfect was the communion that He was able to say, 'I and my father are one.' With that glorious assurance of knowing the Father's will He returned from solitude, and with infinite confidence made His practical decisions.

We are often under the necessity of making great decisions, of choosing one road from many roads. We have often to take momentous steps in the way of life. We are often led up to crises where we know that decision is pregnant with tremendous issues. How do we approach such decisions? We are promised a voice of guidance saying to us, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' But if we never listen for it, never seek it, or shut our ears against it unless it runs parallel with our own fancies, what can it do on our behalf? Is our first thought, as it was Christ's, in everything as it arises to discover what is the will of God for us concerning this? Are we ready and willing to be used as He determines, if only He will let us see what His will is?

¶ Cleanthes of old used a wise prayer:

> Lead me, O God, and Thou, O Fate,
> Thine appointment I await.
> Only lead me. I will go
> With no flagging steps, nor slow;
> Or if I degenerate be,
> And consent reluctantly,
> Still, God, I do follow Thee.

2. Again, Christ felt that *the rush of things* was tiring for the soul, that to keep healthy we must make time now and then to get a breath of pure air from the hills of God. His was the busiest of lives, and there was nothing about Him of that spiritual selfishness which many people mistake for religion. At Nazareth it was James who had long periods of prayer and fasts. For His part Jesus had to toil with all His might and for long hours in the workshop for daily bread, had to a large extent to fall back upon that brave assertion of the Apocrypha that the handiwork of the craftsman is his prayer, the thoroughness and honesty with which he does the ordinary tasks of common life. And later, as often as Christ planned to slip off for an hour or two out of the hot pressure of the crowds, some other anxious claimant was sure to burst in with some petition, which Christ never turned away. 'And he received them,' we read of one such intrusion breaking in on the leisure He had felt that He must have, 'and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.'

We, too, must learn Christ's art of consecrating ordinary duties, of rubbing out that heavy line we draw between things sacred and those merely secular, by carrying our religion into these last also, since it is among these that our days must be spent, and there, if anywhere, that we must meet with God. Yet, says Christ, if you live always in the glare of life, that to a certainty means sunstroke; if you spend all your days in the hot, steamy plains, that must end in a fever in your soul. Somehow or other you must cut little clearings in that jungle in which you are lost, and so catch glimpses of the stars to guide you. Now and then we can escape out of it for a breathing space and be alone with God. When that cannot be, let us remember that prayer is the art of making a friend of God, of turning to Him when we can to seek His counsel, or to give thanks, or to talk matters over with Him, or for no definite reason except this—that we love to be with Him. And as we walk the streets, between one duty as we lay it down and the next as we turn to it, however hurried we may be, we can do that if we really love Him.

¶ Two poetesses of our day have given us apt illustrations—one, Miss Underhill, picturing a society lady, moving about her duties with a perfect grace, absorbed in them, and carrying them through with all her heart, and yet her soul is like a bird which, giving itself steadfastly to its maternal little duties, dreams of the rapture and the glory of the flight that it has known, till, as it sleeps, it twitters, and its wings keep half unfolding of themselves from very longing; the other, Mrs Meynell, telling of a woman who, throughout the day, may not think of the lover who is not for her, and rigorously turns her thoughts away to the dull little nothings that make up her life, but, when her will is laid aside at night with her doffed garments, in her first dream, 'I run, I run, I am gathered to thine arms.' [1]

3. But, in particular, there are two places in life where Christ's example warns us tellingly that we must let nothing come between us and our Father.

(1) Always when *success*, as men judge it, came to the Master, He felt the need of strengthening Himself by prayer to the Father. After the Feeding of the Five Thousand, St John tells us, men began to say, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world'; and symptoms were showing themselves of a movement to take Him by force and make Him a king. It was then, the text tells us, that, when He had sent away the multitude and the disciples, 'He departed into a mountain to pray.' We observe that, when the renown of the miracles was highest, and the blessings and praises of the greatest multitudes were being poured upon His head, then especially mention is made of the prayers of Christ.

Down through the valley the cry doth ring,
'Jesus of Nazareth, King, our King,
The prophet whose touch means to us bread,
Hail, King!'—was what the multitude said.

If things are going well with you, if your fond dreams are coming true, if life is all a triumph, look at Christ's eyes, and at the terror in them as He watches you, and give heed to that cry of His uttered so agonizingly, 'Closer to God! For your life's sake, closer to God!' For you are on the very spot where most souls that make shipwreck have gone down, and left only some tragic flotsam tossing on the waters.

¶ Principal Sir George Adam Smith tells us that he was once climbing the Weisshorn above the Zermatt valley with two guides on a stormy day. They had made the ascent on the sheltered side, and when they reached the top, exhilarated by the thought of the view before him and the triumph of having attained the summit, but forgetting all about the gale, he sprang to the top of the peak and was almost blown over the edge by the wind. The guide caught hold of him and pulled him down. 'On your knees, sir,' he cried; 'you are only safe here on your knees.'

(2) The other place is *sorrow*. Our Lord was always hearing bad news. The story of the world's sin and woes was for ever being poured into His sympathetic ears. But one of the darkest days was surely that day when the disciples of John, stunned, bewildered, broken-hearted, came and told the Christ that they had just been burying their murdered and headless leader. Our Lord loved John the Baptist. He loved him for his fidelity, for his humility, for his magnificent subordination of himself to the purpose of his mission. And now this faithful friend has been foully

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 185.

butchered! How will He receive the terrible news? 'When Jesus heard of it . . . he departed thence into a desert place apart.' The first thing He did was to seek to be alone. When this cold burden of sorrow touched His heart He immediately sought to be alone with God.

In all sorrow much company is burdensome. Silence is never so golden as when we are in the presence of a soul whose trouble is new. The newly-wounded spirit longs for silence, and to be alone. But all solitude is not full of angel-ministries. All loneliness has not healing in its wings. There is a loneliness which is only a haunt of fears, the parent of a morbid moodiness and melancholy, drying up the very springs of endeavour and hope. If we seek to be alone with ourselves in sorrow, then solitude will prove to be a place of terrible drought. Jesus of Nazareth sought to be alone with the Father, and the thirsty land became springs of water. When the cross of life was very heavy He went apart, communed with the Father, gained assurance Himself, and came forth again clothed with superlative radiance and power.[1]

Oh, soul of mine in grief's dark hour,
Or when lower ways offer place and power,
If thou wouldst be always strong and sane,
Come thou apart to the hill again.

There lay down life at the Master's feet,
To take it again with strength replete;
There calmed will be the stress and strain,
And forward we'll leap to share His pain,
As we go to the hill again.[2]

Jesus and the Storm

Mark vi. 47-51.—'And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.'

The miracle of the feeding of the multitude had stirred the people to a dangerous enthusiasm, and Jesus recognized the peril of the moment—that they would take Him by force and proclaim Him king. So He constrained His disciples to depart. Jesus saw that His weary fellow-labourers would never get away from the multitude as long as He was with them; so, sorely against their will, He compelled them to get into the boat again and pull for the other side, leaving Him behind to send away the people. Before He could think of sparing Himself He must look after them, and stand between them and any further exactions. After seeing them safely off He departed alone into a mountain to pray, first dismissing the multitude. They dared not follow Him into the hills; it was now dark; they were in the midst of a wilderness, and they saw He was determined to be alone. In this great crisis of His life His supreme need was to be alone with God.

Meantime one of the wild and sudden storms peculiar to the lake overtook the disciples. They had launched their boat about sunset, but they had not got far when they found themselves at the mercy of the wind, and till long after midnight they struggled against the wind and the waves. There is hardly any doubt that they asked themselves why their Master had constrained them to get into the boat, and why He had not Himself come with them. Yet the disciples were not forgotten by their Master. From His mountain Jesus was watching the little specks of the boats, black against the moonlit waves, and noticing the sore trouble of their toil. He arose to teach them a lesson for life. He came past them, walking on the very waves that distressed them, asserting His Divine supremacy there. They were to learn that even the distressing waves of life might be the way along which the power and calm of His presence would come to them.

It is, after all, struggle and toil that test the stuff we are made of. No one ever became a master mariner by paddling in the calm or sitting still under a fair wind; and no one ever became a master-liver—a man of character—without effort and discipline. It is the contrary wind that makes manhood.

¶ Margot Asquith, in her *Autobiography*, tells of a tramp whom she saw lying at ease in the shelter of a hedge. 'When you wake in the morning,' she asked, 'how do you shape your

[1] J. H. Jowett.
[2] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 220.

course?' 'I always turn my back to the wind,' was the reply.

Again, it is the contrary wind that binds us to our brother-men. If we were to sail along under fair winds, each lying at his ease, life would teach us nothing but lazy selfishness. The contrary wind gives us the fellowship of the oars—the need of keeping time with one another, of each helping the others while he pulls away on his own thwart. We all know that the best things life has brought us—the things that bring the deepest satisfaction—have been the chances of service. Help to the weak, cheer to the struggling, sympathy to the sufferer—these are the true prizes of life. Of all the praises that reward us none is so sweet or strong as the thanks of a brother-man. And even if no thanks come for our help or sympathy, we know in ourselves that we are better for the mere giving of it.

The discipline of struggle is indeed the appointed lot of life. But the question will obtrude itself, 'Who cares for the issue of the struggle?' We toil and persevere, and test our manhood at the oars, and death is the harbour that we reach. All voyages across the sea of life come to that end. What matters it, whether we reach it with the boat strong and safe, or in the collapse of a wreck? And if nothing has watched the struggle but the pitiless indifference of things, is it after all worth making? In one of her books George Eliot describes a story of inner hopes and fears as being laid bare before 'the merciful eyes of solitude.' A strange expression. The thought takes mercy out of Nature, and leaves it a mere huge and callous force, alike indifferent and irresistible; it brings before us that awful spectre of the dead socket out of which no eye is looking. There is infinite pathos in the struggles of men; but the thought of the struggle would be unbearable if we had no faith in an Infinite compassion responding to it. Mankind would lose heart and throw down the oars if the light of faith in a Divine sympathy went out.

¶ The feeling that God has forgotten the world that He made; that He is indifferent to the struggle and sorrow of man, has been tragically expressed by Thomas Hardy in one of his poems.[1]

[1] *God-Forgotten.*

I towered far, and lo! I stood within
The presence of the Lord Most High,
Sent thither by the sons of Earth, to win
Some answer to their cry.

— 'The Earth, sayest thou? The Human race?
By Me created? Sad its lot?
Nay: I have no remembrance of such place:
Such world I fashioned not.'—

— 'O Lord, forgive me when I say
Thou spakest the word, and madest it all.'—
'The Earth of men—let me bethink me....
Yea!
I dimly do recall

'Some tiny sphere I built long back
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)
So named.... It perished, surely—not a wrack
Remaining, or a sign?

'It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefor succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?'—
'Lord, it existeth still.'—

It is the need of an assurance that there is a heart of sympathy at the root of things which Christ came to satisfy. He who was one with the Eternal Being watches from His mountain-top the toilers in the deep. Still in dark and difficult hours His compassionate eye is upon us, noting the toil. Our way is not hidden from Him. He sees and He cares. And though He may delay He will surely come with help and succour.

There is a striking chapter in 'Marius the Epicurean' which gives expression to the longing of man buffeted by the contrary wind. It ends thus: 'A protest comes out of the very depths of man's radically hopeless condition in the world, with the energy of one of those suffering yet prevailing deities, of which old poetry tells. Dared one hope that there is a heart, even as ours, in that Divine "assistant" of one's thoughts, a heart even as mine, behind this vain show of things!' Christ gives the answer:

So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!'

But how much more than one could have dared to hope was the fullness of His answer!

He not only declared the Divine sympathy, He entered the human struggle. 'Jesus cometh to them walking on the sea.' It was not enough that God should declare the Divine sympathy in a word: He chose also to declare it in a Life. There can be no doubt of a sympathy which issues in self-sacrifice; and we see the Heart of God in the Cross of Jesus Christ. All the toil and struggle and bitter disappointment, and hard-kept loyalty of human life, He took upon Himself. He entered the distressing waves: He came to us walking upon the sea. He who ordained the hard law of the Cross Himself submitted to it, to prove by His self-sacrifice that it comes from a Will of love; and it is through this fellowship that He comes most closely to us.

In Christ I feel the heart of God
  Throbbing from heaven through earth;
Life stirs again within the clod,
  Renewed in beauteous birth;
The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,
Breathing His breath out on the air.

In Christ I touch the hand of God,
  From His pure height reached down,
By blessed ways before untrod,
  To lift us to our crown;
Victory that only perfect is
Through loving sacrifice, like His.

Holding His hand, my steadied feet
  May walk the air, the seas;
On life and death His smile falls sweet,
  Lights up all mysteries:
Stranger nor exile can I be
In new worlds where He leadeth me.[1]

Contrary Winds

Mark vi. 48.—'He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them.'

Among the mysteries that beset life behind and before, none is more baffling than its contrary winds. The entail of evil heredity, the force of adverse circumstance, the fret of temperamental disabilities, the whole complex of hostile forces that seem to form a merciless conspiracy against life—these are the things that smite hope in the face and put faith to its sorest trial. When these forces assail a gross and inert soul, it is pitiful enough; when they beat down a brave and aspiring soul, life seems to give the lie to God. 'He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them.' There is a sob in the words that only the brave toiler against tragic odds can fully understand.

1. 'The wind was contrary unto them.' If we always remembered that, how many harsh judgments would remain unspoken! Here is a man of rare natural endowment who has failed to redeem the promise of his brilliant youth. His achievements, respectable enough in themselves, are woefully disproportionate to his talents. And so we judge him severely, and seek to account for his failure by assuming indolence, lack of conscience, and even hidden vices. We forget under what hampering conditions most men have to work; with how many clogging, paralysing influences all but a few have to contend daily. We forget that the power of a man in his best hours, his capacity under the stimulus of a congenial environment, are among the last things we may hope to know. We may compute to a second the long, slow hours the little boat took to cross the lake. We may put the measuring-rod to its leaks, and count its dents and cracks. But we cannot pronounce a final verdict until we have measured also the force of the contrary wind through which she ploughed her way.

As we look back over our own history, how much of it was little else than a toilsome rowing against contrary winds! Years ago we longed to travel East, but we were blown West; and life has never been the same since. It was not all disappointment. There were stretches of quiet, sunlit sea, and we did get to shore at last. But the sea, however deeply blue, was not the magic water of our young dreams; and the shore, however hospitable and fruitful, was not the haven we first desired. Life has brought us much good, yet in the main it was a struggle rather than an achievement; and if our little boat made good, it was in the teeth of contrary winds. We are safe enough, and have much cause for thankfulness; but the questions come to our wearied hearts: Was all this struggle necessary? Was it not a waste of time and of vital force? *Must* life be like a wind-buffeted boat making a little headway, only to be flung back twice the distance?

[1] Lucy Larcom.

Again and again such questions come to the thinking soul: and we dare not repel them, for they are rooted in a valid conviction. They insist that life, as God meant it to be, is not a desperate struggle for bare existence, but a positive, joyous, triumphant achievement, an abundant entrance into the riches and splendour of a Divine inheritance.

Nor are we left without an answer. When the disciples, spent with long rowing against a contrary wind, saw their Lord walking upon the water and received Him into the boat, the wind ceased, and they drew near to the shore they sought. This is not a story of the dim past. It is the eternal miracle—the transmutation of life from contrariety to harmony, from storm to calm. Life is not a sea at the mercy of capricious winds. In life it is neither the contrary wind, nor the small, ill-made boat, but the man in the boat, that counts. It is not the mountain of circumstance, but the faith of the soul, that survives. It is neither heredity nor environment, but the Christ who is both our inheritance and our home, that determines our destiny. We are not chiefly concerned, therefore, to know what a man's boat is like, or even against what force of wind he has to contend, however essential such knowledge may be to a right judgment. The situation goes far deeper than that. What we want to know most is what kind of man is in the boat; whether Christ is there beside him, around him, within him. For the winds depend upon the man, and not the man upon the winds.

One ship drives east and another drives west,
With the self-same winds that blow;
'Tis the set of the sails,
And not the gales,
That tell them the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate,
As we voyage along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.[1]

¶ The life of George MacDonald was of the tempestuous order. It was a long struggle against prejudice and contumely, poverty, ill-health, and bitter griefs. If any nature was tried to the breaking-point, one imagines it was his. And yet to his noble and faithful and loving wife he wrote: 'I can see more and more that nothing will do for anybody but an absolute, enthusiastic confidence in God.' He gives us a vivid account of his circumstances in some of his own poems, as, for instance, in this striking stanza:

My harvest withers. Health, my means to live—
All things seem rushing straight into the dark.
But the dark still is God. . . .
. . . Am I not a spark
Of him who is the light?

The way of life was not smooth or clear for him, but he always seemed to fight his way to faith. At the time of beginning his ministry at Arundel, after a long, changeless spell, he was brought low by ill-health, yet how wonderful his words to her who was to be his helper in life! 'It is discouraging,' wrote he, 'to be laid aside at the beginning—but the design of God in doing so will perhaps appear soon, or, if not now, we shall know afterwards, and if never, it is well, notwithstanding.'[1]

2. Of all the contrary winds that sweep over the sea of life, self-will is the most fierce and intractable. 'If a man loves God truly,' says an old mystic, 'and has no will except to do God's will, the whole force of a mighty river may rush at him and yet will not disturb him or interrupt his peace.' To have no will but God's—does that suggest a feeble resignation, a tame surrender of individuality, an anæmic temper in shameful contrast to the adventurous spirit of the happy warrior? We have often perverted it to so inglorious a meaning; but in reality the soul whose will is one with God's has touched the springs of all power. It is in the seat of command. It is at the helm, and storm and wind are its servants. To receive Jesus into the boat means to share the purposes of Him whom wind and sea obey, to live in the power-house of the universe, the controlling centre of all life.

At odds with Thee,
Through my inconstancy!—
Then is my life
A tragedy of woe,
And voided of delight,—

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

[1] M. D. Roberts.

A grim black night,
Where threatening shadows come and go,
And foes prevail,—
A beggary beyond the pale,
At which my shrinking soul in fear doth quail.
At odds with Thee!—
Ah—that is misery!

At one with Thee!—
Ah, then, in truth no more
Am I alone,
As I was heretofore,
To face the stress of life;
But filled with power
That makes me conqueror in the strife,—
Strong to prevail
When foes assail,
Or patient to endure,
And proof against the world's most sweet allure.
At one with Thee—
Is my delivery.[1]

When Christ is in our boat we care no longer whether it is storm or calm, whether we are tossed about in mid-ocean or have gained the shore. After the disciples had seen their glorified Lord and received of His Spirit, there followed years of bitter persecution, untold privation, a life of toil and peril, and a martyr's death. But if, at their journey's end, our Lord had asked them the old question, 'When I sent you forth without purse or script or shoes, lacked ye anything?' they would surely have answered as of old, 'Nothing.' For he who voyages with Christ cannot be poor, nor does he heed the perils of the way.

Yet the perils remain; the winds still blow contrary at times. Faith is not a magic drug, a spiritual anæsthetic: it is the victory that overcometh the world by doing battle with it. It does not always lay the winds: it more often turns their fury to the furtherance of our progress, yoking life's most hostile forces to the loving purposes of God. So the stormy winds fulfil His word, and the soul that hears in their tumult the rustling of Almighty wings praises God for the storm that swings her free from enervating ease, and for the flood that casts her upon the eternal rocks.[2]

What if Thou hadst led my soul
To the pastures where dull souls feed;
And set my steps in smooth paths, far away
From the feet of those that bleed;
Penned me in low, fat plains,
Where the air is as still as death,
And Thy great winds are sunk to a breath,
And Thy torrents a crawling stream,
And the thick steam of wealth goes up day and night,
Till Thy sun is a veilèd light,
And Heaven shows like a vanished dream!
My being had waked dull and dead
With the lusts of a gross desire;
But now Thou hast purged me throughly, and burnt
My shame with a living fire.
So burn me, and purge my will
Till no vestige of self remain,
And I stand out white without spot or stain.

[1] John Oxenham, *The Vision Splendid*, 65.
[2] E. Herman, *The Secret Garden of the Soul*, 251.

Christ Misinterpreted

Mark vi. 49, 50.—'But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled.'

When through the storm wrack the disciples saw the figure of Jesus moving toward them on the sea, they fell into a perfect panic of fear. 'They cried out,' Mark says; they literally shrieked for terror, 'for they all saw him and were troubled.' Now here is an extraordinary thing; here are disciples 'troubled,' terrified by the coming of their Master. Only a few moments before they had been wishing He were with them. With Christ in the vessel, they felt they could have 'smiled at the storm.' And yet when He did come to them, instead of welcoming Him, they cried out for fear. What was the cause of this strange fright and terror? They took Jesus for other than He was. They supposed it was a spirit, an apparition. It was because they failed to recognize Christ, because they did not know Him, because they misunderstood Him, that they were afraid of Him.

It is not the Twelve alone that have committed this mistake. Men act to-day very much as these disciples acted long ago. They are troubled by Christ, they are afraid of Christ, they will have none of Christ. And the reason why so many refuse and reject Christ in these days is just because, like these disciples, they do not get a fair and full and true view of Him; they see Him only through the distorting media

of prejudices and false representations, and they take Him for other than He is. Christ is rejected because He is misinterpreted and misunderstood.

1. We have become accustomed, almost hardened, to the idea of a majority who disown and repudiate Christ's authority. But when you begin to think of it, is it not strange past words that those who love Christ should be so few and those who do not love Him so many? Knowing what Christ means to us, do we not wonder that all have not done ere this what Charles Lamb said he would do—fall down at the Lord's feet and kiss the hem of His garment? And yet, as a matter of fact, there are thousands of people in our midst who are absolutely indifferent to Him, who do not want to hear about Him, who would be troubled and annoyed if you mentioned His name. Christ being what He is, do we not feel that this indifference is amazing in face of Christ's own confident expectation? 'I, if I be lifted up,' He said, 'will draw all men unto me.' 'We needs must love the highest when we see it,' says Tennyson, repeating in another form our Lord's confident prediction. Tennyson evidently assumes that the love of the highest will triumph over all baser loves. Our Lord evidently expected that, however strongly the appetites and passions of the heart might draw a man towards sin, the drawing power of His personality would prove stronger and mightier than them all. If it be true that we needs must love the highest when we see it, how is it that such multitudes do not love Him? And if it be true that Christ will draw if lifted up, how is it there are so many tens of thousands who have not been drawn? This is the answer. They do not love the highest because they have never seen it. Men are not drawn to Christ because the real Christ has not been lifted up before their eyes. The reason for the indifference and hostility that masses of men and women show to Christ lies in the fact that they have never really seen Him. They have seen only distorted visions of Him. They have looked at Him through the spectacles of prejudice or through the media of false representations, and they have seen no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

¶ Amongst the Latin writers who make references to Christ and Christianity is the great historian Tacitus. Now Tacitus was a great man, a noble man, a man of the grand old Roman type. And yet every reference he makes to Christianity is full of scorn and contempt. He stigmatizes it as an execrable superstition. He speaks of Christians as men rightly hated for their shameful crimes and deserving of the severest punishments. He counts the Christian faith amongst those abominable things that flowed into Rome from every quarter and made it the very cesspool of the world. Now, how came this man, loving right and truth, and clean morals and a simple life as he did, to reject Christ and Christianity thus with contempt? There is only one answer. Tacitus had never seen Christ. All he knew of Christ and Christianity he derived from the lying stories and slanders that were current amongst the people. The great Latin rejected Christ because He misunderstood Him.

(1) There are some who have seen Christ only through the medium of *the Creeds* and representations of *the Church*; and the Christ of the Creeds has troubled and terrified them. No one would disparage the importance of Creeds. It is inevitable that men should attempt to give precise and logical expression to their beliefs, and the great Creeds of the Church are invaluable as marking stages of advance in appreciation of the truth. And yet it is literally true that some of the Creeds give but a distorted picture of the Christ. What kind of an idea of Christ would a man gather, for example, from the Athanasian Creed? One can almost understand men finding nothing to 'draw' them in a Christ of that kind. The representation of Christ given us in the Creeds may be the secret of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Men have made Jesus so stern, so severe, so awful; they have so overlaid His gentleness and love that men have turned to the Mother to find the compassion and pity they sought in vain in the Son. The Christ of the Creeds and the Church has troubled them, frightened them.

(2) There are many who have taken their ideas of Christ from *what other people have told them*. And the representations which men often give of Him are so distorted as to be absolutely false. Have you noticed what a number of Lives of Christ are published? Every such Life is a picture of Christ drawn by the writer's hand, and some of these pictures are the veriest travesties and caricatures. And yet there are multitudes who study these pictures of Christ

who never take the trouble to come face to face with the great Original. There are many educated men who have read Strauss and Renan and Emil Ludwig who have not studied the Gospels. Some years ago hundreds of men were forming their impressions of Christ and Christianity from Mr Blatchford's articles in *The Clarion*. In this Christ there is nothing to command their allegiance and win their love. They are indifferent or hostile because they have seen Christ only through some distorting medium. So He is rejected by them because He is misunderstood.

(3) And, again, men take their ideas of Christ from *the lives of Christian people*. And what caricatures they often see! People have a perfect right to take their ideas of Christ from the Christian! The Christian is supposed to be a living likeness of Jesus. 'As he is . . . so are we,' says John. But what ought to be is one thing, and what is, is quite another. There are multitudes of Christians who are mere travesties and caricatures of Christ. What kind of a photograph of the compassionate Saviour does a hard and grasping disciple make? What kind of a photograph of the unselfish Christ, who in His utter self-sacrifice bore the Cross, does a mean and selfish Christian make? And yet, there are thousands of people who form their conception of Christ from the lives of His followers, and for every vice and meanness and sin of ours our Lord has to suffer. It is a commonplace, is it not, that one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of Christianity is the conduct and life of Christian people? In the Christ that people see in us they see no beauty that they should desire Him! The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. Do we possess these things? Would they stand for our picture?

¶ Dr A. T. Schofield, in his *Behind the Brass Plate*, tells this story which illustrates the power of holy influence. His eldest daughter, a great horsewoman, was thrown when riding, and got a depressed fracture of the skull, on which no surgeon would operate, and from which she eventually died, after some years of great suffering. When she had been ill a fortnight her nurse went to Dr Schofield and said she thought he would like to know that she had become a Christian. 'Why,' he asked, 'what were you when you came?' 'I was an atheist, Doctor,' she replied. 'I suppose,' he then remarked, 'your patient has been speaking to you.' 'No,' she answered, 'she never said a word, but she is the only absolutely contented girl I ever met, and I couldn't stand it, so I asked for her secret, and now I'm a Christian.' [1]

Men are indifferent to Christ, not to say hostile to Him, because of the false ideas they have of Him. They imagine, somehow, that He will empty and impoverish life for them. They do not realize that wherever He goes He carries joy and brightness with Him, and always transmutes life's water into wine.

¶ 'You want me to give up everything,' complained a brilliant but worldly young statesman to Catherine Marsh, who was trying to win him for Christ. 'No, indeed,' she replied earnestly, 'I am asking you to accept everything in Jesus Christ.'

2. The disciples were troubled by the phantom Christ they thought they saw, but when He spoke to them, and they realized it was Jesus Himself, they received Him willingly, gladly, eagerly into the ship. Where the ghostly Christ caused fear and terror, the real Christ found a warm welcome. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth,' said Nathanael, with every prejudice of his up in arms. 'Come and see,' was Philip's reply. We do not know what Nathanael expected to see, but what we do know is that, when he did come and see, every prejudice was dispelled, and he was at our Lord's feet crying out in adoring faith, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art king of Israel.' And so, still, men have no fault to find with the Man who preached the Sermon on the Mount. They have no fault to find with the Man who went about doing good. They have no fault to find with the Man who loved men so well that He gave up His life for them. The Christ of the schools may not attract them very much; the Christ they see in the average Christian may even repel them; but the real Christ always wins admiration, love, worship.

The Influence of Tradition

Mark vii. 8.—'Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men.' (R.V.)

Jesus and His disciples were in the busy, commercial district of Gennesaret by the side of the

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, March 29, 1928.

inland sea. They were much beset by people who came to be healed by the great Prophet, or to listen to His teaching. While they were thus occupied there came upon them Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, that is to say, strict representatives of the ecclesiastical tradition from the great centre of religious observance. The newcomers noticed some neglect of a traditional observance, a ceremonial washing among our Lord's Galilean disciples. Why, they ask of Jesus, Why do not Thy disciples wash their hands before they eat bread? Why do they walk not according to the tradition of the elders? Now, our Lord was not given to disparaging ecclesiastical authority. 'The scribes and the Pharisees,' He said on another occasion, 'sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe.' But now He parries their question with another, far deeper and more searching. As Luther says, He places a wedge against their wedge, and thus drives the other back. 'Why do ye make the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. For Moses said, "Honour"—and that in its practical meaning is help—"your father and your mother," but ye suffer a man to say to his father or his mother, that in respect of which I might have been of use to you is *corban*, a gift. It is dedicated to God in the Temple, and ye suffer him to do nothing for his father or his mother. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.' It is not at all hard to see how this abuse had grown up. In the first place, ecclesiastical authority, where it falls a little below its higher purposes, has always tended to exalt what concerns the service of the sanctuary above what concerns the moral service of mankind. So it had been among the Jews. They had allowed any offering made to the Temple to relieve men from the normal moral service which they owe to their parents. And then, secondly, where ecclesiastical prescription or dispensation is upon slightly too low a moral level, there you can trust human selfishness to drag it still further down. And so no doubt among the Jews people had found many ways in which they could nominally consecrate what in reality they retained for their own selfish uses. So the abuse had come into vogue; so it had spread; so, in result, the commandment of God had been deserted and the traditions of men had taken its place.

Let us apply our Lord's warning to our own case. We, too, have a word and commandment of God, a Word of God deeper, completer, fuller by far than any given to the Jews. The Word of God has been spoken to us by the very Son of God incarnate, Jesus Christ. That word is faithfully recorded for us in the pages of the Gospels, and it is interpreted for us in manifold ways in the Apostolic Epistles. We have the Word of God, and yet it is not hard to think of ways in which we have left the Word of God and substituted our own traditions.

1. *Ecclesiastical Tradition.* — Ecclesiastical authority has been at work on the lower level with us, as it was among the Jews. Go back in thought to the period which separates the time of our Lord from the time just before the Reformation. Froude, in his *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, shows how men as good as Colet, as great as Erasmus, were looking at the ecclesiastical traditions of their own time. They saw, in the first place, that a great mass, a great fabric of ecclesiastical dogma, had grown up upon the original gospel. It had grown to the point where it at least obscured that original deposit of truth which it was meant only to guard and present more forcibly and clearly to men's minds. Thus they cried out for a return to the simplicity of the gospel. And again, they saw masses of ecclesiastical observances, the fulfilment of which dispensed men from the real moral severity of the claim of Christ. Thus there was a cry for a return to the moral reality of the gospel. And on its religious side this cry for a return to Christ was the great animating spirit of the Reformation. 'Back behind the traditions of men we must go,' they said, 'to the Word of God.'

The Bible must fulfil that function which it was intended to fulfil, the function of being the continual court of appeal, the continual criterion of Christian doctrine. Go back fifteen centuries. You find John Chrysostom preaching to a vast congregation in the Cathedral at Antioch. It was ages before printed books existed, but the copying of written books was so enormous a business, and books were so wonderfully cheap, that Chrysostom is able to assume, and to make it emphatic, that even the working men of his congregation ought to be able as easily to possess New Testaments as they possessed tools of their trade; and he

charges them—preaching as he does on page after page of Holy Scripture—he charges them to go back and verify what he says for themselves in their books at home. Or, as an even older writer says, 'Believe not what I say unless you find the demonstration thereof from Holy Scripture.' It is the character of tradition always and everywhere, where it is left unchecked, to become hardened, stereotyped, one-sided, lowered in tone.

2. *Social Tradition.*—Social tradition works in exactly the same way to obscure the original force and meaning of the teaching of Christ. Take it on one point only, our Lord's teaching about wealth. Wealth, in the opinion of Christ and of the Apostolic writers, is a responsibility, a trust for the good of others; its unlimited increase is an unlimited peril. Simplicity is a duty, luxury a sin. Riches are no kind of excuse for idleness and self-indulgence. In the days when to be a Christian was to incur the peril of persecution, this ideal was, if not of course perfectly fulfilled, at least as an ideal fairly maintained. Afterwards the voluntary poverty of the religious orders at least kept the ideal before the imaginations and the minds of men. But the religious orders fell in our country, the very ideal well-nigh passed out of the minds of men, nothing seemed more natural than that people should regard each increase of wealth as only an increase in the opportunities of enjoyment and luxury. Yet it is not possible steadily to listen to the words of Christ and His apostles without feeling sure that if our Lord were to come into the midst of our towns to-day, and to move about in our civilization, He would find almost everything to condemn in current conception of the use and employment of wealth. Think of the fruitless idleness of a great part of the wealthy youth of our country! Think of the unlimited claim made on life for amusement! Think of the money spent by old and young on luxuries, on dress, on sport, on moving about from place to place abroad in foreign travel, without any kind of justification from the requirements of recreation or of health! Is it possible to think that our Lord would not have spoken severe words about things like these? In truth, the things we think we cannot do without tend to grow upon us at an amazing pace unless we most deliberately set ourselves to check them. Luxuries are like the pieces of thread with which the Lilliputians tied Gulliver, each in itself was easy to break, but all together they held him bound more tightly than strong cords. So are those things we imagine we cannot do without.

¶ Dr Dale tells of a man who said to him, 'I was a great deal happier when I lived in a small house, and had two housemaids, than I am now with eight gardeners.' Dale said, 'My dear friend, cannot you have the two housemaids again, and give up the eight gardeners?' 'No,' he said, 'there is the sadness of it. It cannot be done.'

Whatever may be the duty of the State in regard to wealth, it appears to be beyond question that it is the duty of the Church to urge upon the consciences of her members the teaching of Christ in regard to the responsibilities of wealth. For, on the other hand, think of the vast amount of good which could be done by wealth bestowed, not in casual, dribbling, indiscriminate charity, but bestowed alike with princely generosity and with strong deliberate considerateness. There is hardly any limit to the difference which it might make in a period of years in our social state.

¶ Not so long ago Mr Baldwin, realizing the 'wave of extravagance and materialism' under which all classes were in danger of being submerged, put to himself the question: How can they be made to understand the gravity of the financial situation, that love of country is better than love of money? It could only be done by example, and the wealthy classes had a great opportunity of service which could never recur. They knew the danger of the huge national debt after the war and the burden of it in the years to come. Let them impose upon themselves, each as he was able, a voluntary levy. 'I have been considering this matter for nearly two years,' he said, 'and I hoped that some one else might lead the way. I have valued my estate, and decided to give a fifth of it as a thank-offering, in the firm conviction that never again shall we have such a chance of giving our country that form of help which is so vital at the present time.' Mr Baldwin's example has not been followed, but as he said at a later time, 'I would rather sink with faith than swim without it.'

Why is it, then, seeing we are all Christians, that we do not do the things that our Lord would have us do? It is just the strength of social

tradition. One by one, we should not dare to stand in the face of our Lord, and set aside or explain away the meaning of His words. Together we dare to do it, solely because of this strength of tradition. The conscience of one or another of us is stirred, but we go home and we talk to one another. We say, 'Well, but these things cannot be wrong, for this person and that person, and society as a whole, do not think them wrong.' So it is we encourage one another to ignore, to explain away, what words mean! And thus we make the commandment of God of none effect by our tradition.

There was a day when Zacchæus stood forth and said, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.' It was the first time Zacchæus had been brought into contact with our Lord, and that was the declaration in which he announced the way in which for the future he intended to regulate and model his life. And Jesus met that declaration with His royal welcome, 'This day has salvation come to this house, for that this man also is a child of Abraham.' There are moments in the life of all of us when we look at life afresh, when there is a fresh beginning, a fresh opening, when we must plan and lay down the lines on which our lives are to be lived. It is at such moments that it matters supremely that we should face fully the teaching of our Lord. It matters supremely how many of those who call themselves by the name of Christ are really meaning to follow His teaching, and it matters never more than now. It is impossible to misunderstand the signs of the times in one respect. From all sides, from quarters the most unexpected, men are reaching out their hands and wanting to know what the real teaching and meaning of the Christ is. It is just in a situation like this that everything depends on whether those who hold His faith and most loyally own His Name are going to apply themselves to realize and to set in action the meaning of His teaching.

What Religion is Made Of

Mark vii. 14.—'When he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand.'

Jesus at this time was becoming a popular and much talked-of teacher in Galilee. A deputation came down from headquarters at Jerusalem to see what He was like. They found a good deal to question. They found, in particular, that He was very fast and loose with the great Mosaic traditions, the washing of pots and pans, and so forth. A long argument began about that. Now, we must remember that these people had more to say for themselves than we are apt to think. The Jewish nation was passing through a time of depression. It had had a glorious past in the days of the Old Testament. It was looking forward to a great future, when the Messiah should come. Meantime there was a period of depression under the tyranny of the Roman power. Now, said the Pharisees, what is wanted to hold the people together, to preserve the national unity, the national consciousness, is something that will make the Jews remember that they are Jews: hence the importance of the Mosaic traditions and the Mosaic laws. Loose these and the people will become dissipated and disintegrated. That is why the best of the Pharisees wanted to hold on to the things distinctively Jewish during that hard time. The nation must maintain its national consciousness in view of the coming of the Messiah. Well, a debate arose between these Jewish Rabbis and Jesus regarding the Mosaic law, regarding external things, such as the washing of pots and pans. This ancient authority was quoted, and that. The people sat round in a kind of semi-circle, feeling that this was a learned and ecclesiastical matter in which they were not called upon to interfere. Then Jesus caught sight of the people standing round and said in effect: 'This is not religion. This is a learned dispute that concerns only a few ecclesiastics. Religion is something for every one of you. Religion is something every one of you can understand.'

1. If that be so, it suggests at once that religion is not either of two things with which it is most frequently identified and confused. These two things are: (1) ceremonial observances—going

to church, and the like; and (2) orthodoxy—the holding of certain dogmatic beliefs and opinions. If religion be something for all and something everybody can understand, it cannot really be made up of either of these things, however useful, however essential these things may be to give it its fullest expression.

(1) *Ceremonial Observances.*—Religion cannot be made up of any outward observance such as church-going. This is not for a moment to deprecate or undervalue the gathering together of individuals, still more of families, in the House of God. There are few things, indeed, more necessary to the spiritual—even to the social—welfare of the community than that men and women should come to God's House to remember the highest things and to join hands in honouring His Name. Nevertheless church-going is not the thing out of which religion is made. There are many people to whom the outward helps of religion are not always available. No outward institution of religion can be laid down as that something which everybody at one moment can exercise. The stuff out of which religion is made is as much for the person who is driving an engine, or nursing the sick, or doing necessary domestic work, as it is for those who are present in God's House. Religion is for all; therefore it is made out of no ceremonial institution.

(2) *Orthodoxy.*—Then take the things of dogma and the things of orthodoxy. They are important. But theology is not something for everyone. It is not something everyone can understand. That is apparent enough from the efforts of many who write upon it or discuss it. Religion is distinct from the intellectual expression of it. Theology is important enough, but religion is something which can be understood by the learned and unlearned alike; by the so-called plain and practical man as well as by the student or the professor. The stuff out of which religion is made is something which every man can grasp.

¶ Sully, the psychologist, has a story of how a mother, reading Bible stories to her child, proposed to miss one out as being too hard for her to follow; whereupon the wise little one replied, 'I can understand them all perfectly well, if only you would not explain them to me!'

It is the explanations that puzzle. As a character in Tchekov's *The Wife* says: 'I listened, and according to my habit applied my usual measures to him, but not a single one of them would fit even approximately: and yet, curiously, while I only looked at him, and listened to him, he was as a man, perfectly clear to me, but the moment I began applying my measures to him he became, in spite of all his sincerity and simplicity, an extraordinarily complex, confused, and inexplicable nature.' So, 'to explain Jesus,' says Glover, 'His friends and contemporaries spoke of Him as the Logos, the Sacrifice, Christ our Passover, the Messiah, and the like. Of these terms, not one is intelligible without a commentary. To ordinary people Jesus is at once intelligible, far more than the explanations of Him.' [1]

2. What, then, are the things which are for every man, whether he is busy or able to attend church, whether he is a learned man or a plain man of affairs? What are the things that are for all? Are they not these: (1) the things of the heart; and (2) the things of the conscience?

(1) *The Things of the Heart.*—They are for everyone. Everyone can understand them. Take love. If it is the real thing, love is just the same for the servant girl as for the duchess. Religion, however we express it, is rightly a thing of the heart—love in the heart, what we call the love of God, the love of Christ.

But what does it mean to love God, to love Christ? We are far too apt to associate the word 'love' with the idea we get of it in novels or plays—the emotional side of it. Love has its emotional side, and in certain aspects of it, as when a young man falls in love with a girl, the emotional side of it is naturally very strong, and with people of certain temperaments always will remain strong. That is not love itself, but only the emotional expression of it, which in certain relationships of life is most proper and natural. Love is a way of living. Let us illustrate that. Think of some of the men who fought in the war, whether they fell or not. Take a young man who was living very happily and comfortably, with good prospects, with many things in his life promising and satisfactory. The war came, and he went out to the ghastly life of the trenches. He changed his way of living. That was love of country. Probably he was not an emotional person. He did not go about singing 'God save the King.' He did not wrap himself in a Union Jack.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 209.

Because of love for his country he changed his way of living. Or take a boy, a poor boy, say, coming to the city to his first situation. He is a shy boy. He would be most embarrassed if anybody ever saw his mother kiss him. Yet he sends home so much of his wages every week to his mother, leaving so much less for himself, for picture palaces, sport, and so on. It means a certain difference in his way of living. And that is love of his mother. Whether he expresses himself sentimentally or not is a matter of temperament and disposition. His love changes his way of living. Almighty God Himself, we read, loved the world—how? God so loved the world as to change His way of living, and what we call the Incarnation, the Son of God living on this earth, was a new form of living for Almighty God, because God loved the world. That is what love is. Is it not plain, if we look at it in that way, that religion is made of love? Not always emotion: that depends upon temperament and many things. It is our way of living toward God and toward man.

(2) *The Things of the Conscience.*—Here, again, is something for everyone, something everyone can understand. There are many questions of right and wrong which have to be answered, and we may easily be led into casuistry of one form or another. But in every human life there are great broad issues: that which is simply right and has simply got to be done, and that which is simply wrong, and must not be done. They say that the way to make money is to take care of the pence; the pounds take care of themselves. The law of morality is: Take care of the pounds and the pence will take care of themselves. Have a few broad issues—truth, integrity, purity, faithfulness, brotherliness—things you see are right and simply have to be done; things you see are wrong and simply must not be done. It is these big issues that make our morality and our religion. We must test our religion by the things of the heart and the conscience.

¶ 'If we are right on the ultimate question,' says Dr Hutton, 'we are right everywhere. I agree with Mr Chesterton, who is never so serious as when he appears to be merely amusing, that when he is arranging about rooms with a landlady, the first question he asks her is not what are her terms, but what is her total view of the universe; because, as Mr Chesterton says with perfect cogency, if she is right there, she is right everywhere. In that case the coals will be right, the gas will be right, the food will be right; everything will be right, if, to that woman, this world means God, and life means duty.'

The most important things in our life are the things we are getting to like. It really is more important what we are getting to like than what we are getting to believe. Are the things we are getting to like things we can bring into God's presence, things that Christ's presence will consecrate? We shall make a great mistake if we go out to meet our temptations without having in our life some things made up which we are going to do, some things which we are not going to do. We dare not leave these, especially the latter, until some sudden danger, some unguarded moment comes.

And what are our sins? They are not some artificial list of evil things handed down by tradition or otherwise. Our sins are the things we do not like to talk about to Jesus Christ, the things we do not like to bring into God's presence and let His verdict be passed upon them. When we bring our heart's desires—the things we love and live for—near Him, they become clear. We hear the call of religion and understand it, and if we obey, we find not religion only, not some abstract morality; we find a fellowship with a Spirit, which is the Spirit of God, whom to know is life eternal.

RADICAL REFORM

Mark vii. 21-23.—'For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. . . . All these evil things come from within.'

Jesus Christ is the most radical of all reformers. Like a wise physician who does not merely treat the symptoms which appear outwardly but searches for the inward seat of the trouble, so the great Physician of souls who came to heal the dread maladies that afflict mankind does not

content Himself with treating the symptoms which appear in human conduct but goes deeper till He finds the root of the disease in the heart of man. In this respect His method stood in marked contrast to the method of the Pharisees. They seem to have concerned themselves mainly with the outward symptoms. To a very large extent religion was with them a matter of observances and minute regulations of conduct. They made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, as our Lord said, taking no thought of the foulness within. The result was that they became 'like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'

In contrast to all this Jesus continually urged men to look to the heart, for there lay the real seat of the trouble. There is an Old Testament story of a prophet who, when appealed to because the land was barren and the water bad, went forth to the spring of the waters and poured in there the healing salt, so that, once the spring was pure and sweet, there no longer issued from it poisonous streams (2 Kings ii. 21). In the same spirit Jesus taught that, as the tree is, so is its fruit. 'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.' It cannot be otherwise. Therefore there is only one effectual remedy. Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good. It was on this principle that He traced the sin of murder to the passion of anger flaming in the heart, and found the root of adultery in the lustful thought.

Now it will be conceded by all thoughtful minds that there are symptoms of something radically wrong with the world in our time. Indeed the symptoms are so serious that they are a matter of grave concern on all hands. The very life of civilization is held to be in danger. Mankind is acknowledged, without controversy, to be suffering from some desperate malady. In these circumstances it is most timely that we should earnestly ponder our Lord's diagnosis of world ills, and learn His remedy.

I

The Root of Evil

The root of all evil is in the heart. There it has its secret lurking place in regions far removed from the public eye. The inner life of every man is by far the largest and most important part of his existence. Modern psychology has taught us the immense extent and influence of the subconscious, that part of our inner life which goes down to depths which even we ourselves cannot fathom. But if to that be added the conscious realm of our thinking and feeling and willing, then we see how immense is the world of our inner life. Like the iceberg, with nine-tenths of its mass below the surface, so we move through the world. As we move, men catch the gleam of a facet here and there and so form their opinion of us, but beneath the surface there is an abyss which they cannot fathom nor can we reveal. Yet in that hidden world lie all the principles that rule our daily life, all the impulses to action, all the motives, good and bad, that govern conduct. 'Our lives all issue out from our hearts, like so many streams out of so many deep and hidden springs.' [1] As every tree bears its own fruit, so our inward thoughts and desires bear fruit in deeds. 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things' (Matt. xii. 35). If, then, we would diagnose evil we must go to the root and recognize that every sin, every crime, every social wrong is the natural and inevitable fruit of a wrong thought. This is no less true of the great world evils. 'Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts?' (James iv. 1).

From this it would appear that the care and culture of the heart is all important. The heart is the strategic point. The kind of souls men have, the ideals that win their allegiance, the moral forces that sway their conduct—these are the matters of supreme moment. Wherefore it is written, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life' (Prov. iv. 23). 'We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling and destiny,' said Sir Walter Scott to his son-in-law Lockhart, 'unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine, compared with the education of the heart.' [2]

The healing of the world's ills, therefore, must begin with the healing of men's hearts. David Livingstone prayed that heaven's blessing

[1] Alexander Whyte, *With Mercy and With Judgment*, 45.
[2] J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, viii. 28.

would rest on anyone who would help to heal the running sore of Africa. Britain tried to heal that running sore from the outside, placing her vigilant cruisers along the coast to stop the nefarious slave-trade; but it was only when men, in the spirit of Livingstone, went into the interior, carrying gospel truth and Christian civilization, that the running sore was dried up at its source. So must it ever be with all the evils that afflict mankind. The battle must always be fought in the interior, else nothing really effective and permanently good is accomplished. Speaking at the close of the War, Lord Bryce said, in words which cannot be too often quoted, 'What we want is a world of new and better men.'

II

Superficial Remedies

In the light of these considerations certain remedies which are offered, and in which men are inclined to put great confidence, are seen to be superficial. Valuable they may be in their own proper sphere, and by no means to be neglected, yet they do not penetrate to the root of the evil, and so are unable, in themselves, to effect a lasting cure.

1. *Outward Conduct.*—Among these may be mentioned, first, the reform of outward conduct, a most ancient and respectable remedy. It was upon this, as we have seen, that the Scribes and Pharisees concentrated. Let men look to their conduct, let them change their manners, let them carefully observe all the precepts of the Law, and all would be well. They even went so far as to say that if only Israel would perfectly observe the Law for a single day the Kingdom of God would come. There have never been wanting many whose hope of salvation, both for themselves and for the world, rested on the same foundation. John Bunyan makes his Pilgrim turn aside to the town of Morality, seeking relief from his burden at the hands of Mr Legality, or, failing him, at the hands of his son, Mr Civility; but he was not long in finding out his terrible mistake. And there is an impressive weight of testimony, coming from saints and earnest men of all ages and nations, that the reform of outward conduct is ineffective and has no saving virtue in it. Coleridge quotes with approval the aphorism of Leighton that 'to set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to regard and find out the inward disorder of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is foul, or out of order within, which is a continual business, and does no good.'[1] That, perhaps, is to put it too strongly, for the connection between a man's outward conduct and his inward thought is more intimate than that between the hands of a clock and the works. We know that our outward actions and habits have a most powerful reflex influence upon our inward thoughts, so powerful and marked that some have even gone to the extreme of arguing that our bodily movements dominate our mental states, and not the reverse. That, of course, is an exaggeration which cannot be taken seriously, but in view of the acknowledged influence of body on spirit, action and habit on thought and feeling, we cannot be too careful in the regulation of our outward conduct. Good habits are among the chief supports of a truly moral life. Yet, when all is said, it remains true that the reformation of the outward life, if it stand alone, is but surface work. It is like cutting off the tops of weeds and noxious plants while the ground is full of their seeds and roots. Depend upon it, there will soon be another evil crop.

2. *Social Reform.*—Somewhat similar, but on a wider scale, is the remedy held in high esteem to-day and known as social reform. Let us change man's environment, and in that way we shall effect the greatest possible improvement. It appears as if multitudes in our time place so complete faith in this remedy as to regard everything else as practically negligible in comparison. Now it need not be denied that social reform can accomplish much; for men and women, and especially children, are influenced down to the roots of their being by their social environment. All that can be done along this line ought to be done, and who shall deny that much is still needing to be done. But two difficulties at least emerge. You cannot legislate in advance of public opinion; you cannot get bad men to make good laws, or ignorant and foolish men to make wise laws. And then, again, even if you had wise and good laws, they would not suffice to make the people good. For example, the housing question is acute, but it cannot be solved merely by building houses with all

[1] *Aids to Reflection.*

modern conveniences. There are people whose spirit is such that they will make a slum wherever they dwell. Your reform must touch something far deeper than man's environment. No man was a more ardent social reformer than Hugh Price Hughes, yet his passionate and supreme conviction was that 'all wicked institutions are founded upon false and wicked ideas; and these must first be altered before you can effectually and permanently alter the institutions which they produce.' [1]

3. *Education.*—A remedy which goes deeper, and has by many been considered adequate, is that of education. Let us change men's ideas for the better and we shall attain our end; let us instil all manner of truth into their minds and it will drive out error and ignorance. Now this would be adequate if man were purely a rational being, and if error were synonymous with ignorance, as the ancient Greeks supposed. But we have learned by bitter experience that a man may know the truth but have no disposition to follow it. Indeed, as William Law says, 'the worst man knows more than the best man practises.' It is not enough merely to exhibit what is wise and right, unless at the same time you can give to men a sufficiently powerful impulse to do the right. Here is where education, considered as the imparting of various truths, fails, as is being more widely recognized every day. The Japanese Minister of Education, Dr Mizuno, recently made a remarkable speech, in which he said, 'Education is most important. But, though education helps to guide the ideals and spiritual outlook of the nation, we cannot attain these ends merely through its help. Here religion is indispensable. There are various religions, and I do not pretend to say whether any one of them is good or bad, but the guidance and inspiration of the human heart through religion is an evident necessity in the progress of civilization.' [2] Remarkable words, and profoundly true! But we can go a step farther, and say that not only is 'the guidance and inspiration of the human heart through religion an evident necessity,' but that this guidance and inspiration is given in its highest and purest form by Jesus Christ through His Gospel.

4. *Revolution.*—Before speaking of that, we may mention still another remedy which has been proposed, and is passionately believed in and preached by some in our time, namely, revolution. Some who esteem themselves the most radical of all reformers say, let us change the whole constitution of society; let us clear the whole ground and build anew; let us sweep away all those institutions that hinder the progress of mankind, and then set all things right and bring in a new and happier world-order. In the years of hardship and disillusionment following the War many have looked in this direction for deliverance, and here and there the experiment has been tried. One would not make too much of the fact that in Russia, where the experiment has been tried on a vast scale and with rigorous thoroughness, the result has been a tragic failure, entailing unspeakable human misery. But the criticism which must be made of the revolutionary from the point of view of the gospel is that he is not radical enough. He forgets that on the morning after the revolution the hearts of men will still remain unchanged and, in consequence of that, the bad old world will continue on its evil way.

This, doubtless, explains the antipathy of Jesus to Jewish revolutionary ideas, and His apparent indifference even to social reform. He peacefully accepted the Roman tyranny, He uttered no word in direct condemnation of slavery, He voiced no democratic demand. His apostles followed in the same path. St Paul frankly tells the slaves never to mind, for they are the Lord's freemen. Whatever a man's economic condition, be he bond or free, be he enslaved or emancipated, the good life was always possible for him, and the Kingdom of Heaven was within his reach.

III

The Radical Cure

This leads us, finally, to consider the radical cure which Jesus offers for the world's ills and for the salvation of men. It is, in a word, the renewal of men's hearts. As He said Himself to Nicodemus, 'Ye must be born again,' and 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' There is no shorter road to real and permanent betterment. The hearts of men must be radically changed before it can be well with them as individuals or with the world. If all evil springs out of the heart of man, as

[1] *The Philanthropy of God*, 240–1.
[2] M. S. Murao, *Japan and Christ*, 15.

our Lord teaches, then the roots of evil must be dug up and cast out of man's heart. Nothing less will suffice, for if the 'roots of bitterness' be left within, we may be sure they will spring up to trouble us.

But, on the other hand, if only we could get men of pure heart and right spirit, then, as the good tree bears good fruit, their outward action as a natural consequence would be right, and the social order would soon right itself. Even a thinker who has so little sympathy with the gospel as Bertrand Russell is bound, when he comes to consider the teaching of Jesus, to admit that 'if all men could summon up the courage and the vision to live in this way in spite of obstacles and discouragement, there would be no need for the regeneration of the world to begin by political and economic reform; all that is needed in the way of reform would come automatically, without resistance, owing to the regeneration of individuals.'[1] Surely we can all see how naturally and inevitably those blessed results would follow if the hearts of men were renewed and quickened by the spirit of Christ. The Chinese sage Confucius, with his wonderful moral insight, saw that this was the only effective way. In his 'Great Learning,' he sketches the method of wise kings of ancient time who wished to spread illustrious virtue through the world. 'They first ordered their own states well. Wishing to order their states well, they first regulated their own families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their own characters. Wishing to cultivate their characters, they first rectified their own hearts. . . . Then, their hearts being rectified, their characters were cultivated. Their characters being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their state was rightly governed. Their state being rightly governed, the whole world was made tranquil and happy. All must therefore consider the cultivation of the heart the root of everything else.'[2]

Yes, we can see how it would work. The only question would seem to be, Is it possible? Someone has said, 'There is no power in the world to make a bad heart good.' But the teaching of Scripture is very different. The voice of prophecy foretold that men would have new hearts and right spirits put within them. And this was fulfilled in the gospel, through the power of the Spirit of Christ. This is no pious imagination, but is solid fact. *Experto crede*, believe the man who has had the experience. Christian history abounds in examples beyond number of men over whom the great change has passed. There was the dying thief in a moment of grace made mete for Paradise. There was Saul the persecutor transformed into Paul the chief of the apostles. And so on down the Christian ages to our own time, when we have seen cannibals won for Christ and the most degraded of our race turning to God. In face of these records and testimonies and of all that weight of evidence, it cannot reasonably be doubted that there is in the gospel a power which can change a man down to the very roots of his being, and make him, as St Paul says, 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.'

And this is why the Church preaches, and will ever preach, the gospel. Not moral precepts, not social reform, but the regeneration of man's heart by the spirit of Christ. Hugh Price Hughes tells of a meeting of railway men in London, at which an engine-driver made a pithy and most Christian speech. 'Mr Chairman,' he said, 'there are some people who say to us in the present day, Legislate, Legislate, Legislate! So say we working men. Parliament can do a great deal for us, and the sooner it does it the better. There are others who say, Educate, Educate, Educate! So say we working men; and we are very thankful for what has been done of late for the education of the working classes. But while we are ready to say Legislate, Legislate, Legislate! and Educate, Educate, Educate! we say, above everything else, Regenerate, Regenerate, Regenerate!'[1]

The Divine programme is a programme of radical reform. Nothing less than this, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And by what means will He that sitteth upon the throne make all things new? He begins in the souls of men, creating within them new hearts and right spirits. Then, through their lives and labours, by the blessing of His Spirit, He establishes and expands His Kingdom in the world, till at last the new heavens and the new earth shall come wherein dwelleth righteousness.

J. H. Morrison.

[1] H. D. M'Keehan, *The Patrimony of Life*, 116.
[2] C. Y. Hsu, *The Philosophy of Confucius*, 38.

[1] *The Philanthropy of God*, 254.

The House of Quiet

Mark vii. 24.—'He entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.'

For the need of His own soul Jesus desired retirement and even secrecy. It was the repair of silence and solitude that He sought, and for this cause He would have no man know where He abode. This is one of the places in the Gospels where we are reminded of what ministry was meaning for Jesus and what it was costing Him. But for this record and some few incidental revelations elsewhere it were easy to be misled into the notion that, until Gethsemane saw His agony and Calvary was near, what Jesus did for men was lightly accomplished. He moved among men with the joy of redemptive service radiant about Him, but with the burden of it greatly and nobly hidden. Nevertheless that burden was there, and it was heavy.

1. Our Lord's sense of the need for refuge and silence had particular cause at this time, and some understanding of this may help us to enter with Him into the place of His secret dwelling. The Evangelist is particular to connect the retreat to this quiet house with the publicity and activity which preceded it. 'From thence he arose,' and there is point in the sequence. If we go back into this chapter we may discover with some preciseness why He thus felt constraint upon Him so that, shutting to the door, He would have no man know where He dwelt. This is how the matter opens. 'Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.' It was a sinister and malicious deputation come with intent of mischief. With them Jesus came face to face with hostility and hypocrisy, and with malice which took religion for a cloak. Then there arose sharp controversy, in which Jesus spoke His mind with plainness and severity. There was laid on Him the duty of remonstrance and rebuke, and He discharged it without flinching or fear.

Now there are few who follow Christ who escape occasion when some such duty is manifestly theirs. If a man of business meets and is challenged by that which is clearly base or unjust, if so be that he follow Christ, there will be laid on him in that hour the difficult duty of remonstrance and rebuke.

But there is something written here to remind us that there is no atmosphere more perilous for a Christian than that of controversy, and no duty with more danger in it for the soul than that of rebuke. 'From thence he arose.' To the silence and to God after the controversy and the rebuking, and, if He needed it, much more do we when in following Him there falls on us a like duty. Many a true and courageous stand for right in the face of evil has been robbed of value and even become the occasion of new mischief by the after-bearing of the witnesser. Have we ever done such a thing without having to search our own soul lest censoriousness should have crept in, or our words aiming at truth have missed charity, or our bearing betrayed that sense of self-superiority in which the meekness of the Lord was not discernible? We never need to be alone with God and with our own souls so much as when hostility is to be met with, or in the poisonous atmosphere of controversy, where dangers lurk too subtle for our guarding.

¶ The one recorded outbreak of anger on the part of the saintly Leighton was when, after his consecration as Bishop of Dunblane, he visited some Covenanting friends, and one of them attacked him severely for abandoning his former principles. 'I have dined at Goodtrees,' he said, 'and I had rather I had stayed at home and chawed gravel.' Not very strong words after all, but for him strangely forcible and bitter.[1]

2. There was yet another constraint upon our Lord for refuge and quiet. He had been that day made vividly conscious of the worse side of human nature. He had looked into the depths of the evil heart of man. We feel His recoil in His words—'From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.' We seldom read these in public; it would be well if we read them often in private, and steadily faced up to what they mean and the truth of them.

¶ 'What do you make of sin?' said a friend to Ernest Renan. 'Sin,' he said musingly; 'I suppose I suppress it.' But not so Jesus.

There are many counsellors who are per-

[1] J. A. Stokes-Little.

plexing in their inadequacy. They will tell you to ignore sin. If you fall, get up again, and waste no time reflecting. There are varieties of 'new thought' which are trenchant in their attack upon the old dogmatic because of the stress it has laid on the reality of moral evil and the fact of sin. One may be ready and eager for new thought, but it must square with the facts of an old Adam. When it offers, in response to the cry of the tyrannized soul, glib assurances about the facility of righteousness, it becomes farcical to men and women who know what human nature is.

Now it is easy when we have to face the badness of human nature—whether we make the discovery within ourselves or it is thrust on us by others—to become cynics. 'The more I have to do with my fellow-men, the more I respect my dog,' said one in whom the experience of the dark side of human nature was on the way to produce the finished cynic. It is easy also to become a lenient self-excuser on the ground that our worst is relatively good.

¶ 'In every age,' says Morley, 'cases meet us where experience changes the idealist and the reformer first to doubter, then to indifferent, next to pure egoist, at last to hard cynic. The process may be gradual, but it is apt to be implacable. And the fallen man one day awakes to find his sensibility gone, his moral pulse at a stand, and a once ardent soul burnt down to ashes. When the waking hour arrives, one man may still have grace enough to go out and weep bitterly, another only mocks.'

The more we are compelled to recognize of this side of human nature, the more we shall need to take opportunity for silence and communion with our own soul and with God. Behold the way of Jesus! 'From thence he arose,' from the perception and exposure of human evil and wrong. Did He feel the need to see human nature afresh in the light of God? Did He feel that He must retrieve His faith in man by renewal of His faith in God? He was no romantic sentimentalist. No one who ever lived knew as He knew and felt the sinister side of human nature. But no one ever believed more triumphantly in man than He. Was it not because in these quiet hours of recollectedness and prayer He was able to correct this vision, to look at man from the side of God, and in view of all the Divine potentialities still remaining by virtue of the unextinguishable kinship of man with God, of the might of Divine redemption, of the magnificence of Divine grace? How much more do we need this! To be quiet and alone with God is to get a new and immeasurably more hopeful view of ourselves and our fellows.

¶ 'Browning,' says Professor Gossip, 'tells us that what won him for Christ was this, that while others tried to soothe his angry conscience, and kept urging that, really, things were not nearly so bad as he was making out, Christ looked him in the eyes and told him bluntly that he was a desperate sinner, worse, much worse, even than he realized. And at that, queerly enough as you might think, the man was not discomfited but heartened. Here at last, he felt, is one who understands and knows the facts. And since his desperate diagnosis is so accurate, may not His optimism also justify itself even in me. Well does He know what is in human nature, and yet, knowing the worst, He has still confident hope.'

3. We may pass now from the sequence which led to this retreat to another suggestion. We are held by this desire of Jesus that no man should know where He abode. We suspect a purpose of blessing in it for the man whose house and home it was. It is excellent to think of Him as a guest; of what a blessing He was in the home at Bethany; of what a blessing He might have brought to the Pharisee's house if Simon had been of a more generous heart. There are also anonymous benefactors of Jesus of whom we wish we could know more. The goodman of the house, upon whose upper room furnished Jesus knew He could assuredly count, is one of the unknown and nameless friends of Jesus over whom our imagination lingers. There is one of whom we know even less—the goodman of the house where Jesus lodged somewhere on the border of Tyre and Sidon. Only the devout imagination can recover him, for Jesus 'would have no man know' that He abode with this man of the marches.

It is still true that there are times when He abides with us and would have no man know it. There is a time for speech about Him, and we openly confess Him too tardily and reluctantly. There is a perpetual tendency for religion to lose the frankness of its utterance. Nevertheless, there are times of rightful reticence.

¶ 'I have seen,' says Mr Yates, 'a minister of Christ's gospel changed and his ministry transformed. Once it was superficial, flippant, ready for will-o'-the-wisps of easy speculation; it became deep, grave, and most steadfastly anchored to the great verities of the gospel. It was hard and steely, and it became tender and glowing. What lies between no man knows, save that a great sorrow opened the door of that minister's heart to the Lord. But the Lord shut to that door, and who are we that we should seek to open it or pry into the ways of God with the soul of a man? We know it only by its sign, and of this we say: "It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes."'

4. Lastly, there is the frustrated secrecy. 'He would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.' It was because a little girl was in distress and her mother in trouble that He could hide Himself no more. 'For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet.' The love of Christ cannot keep itself to itself in a world of need. If Christ take up His abode with us, He cannot hide Himself to the end. It is to be known where He dwells, for the door of sympathy and succour is flung open at the approach of suffering and necessity. When once the feet of Christ have crossed the threshold of a human heart, all wounded feet may cross that threshold too.

Hereby we know if Christ be in us. He will discover Himself through us in sympathy and service. If He be our guest we shall no longer live unto ourselves. There is, first, the love we receive. There is, second, the love we offer. My soul and my Saviour has its sequence in my neighbour and my service. You never open the door so promptly in sympathy, or emerge so swiftly in service, as when for a season it has been shut upon yourself and your Lord. No necessity is an intrusion, and no human need a stranger, when we know what it is to be much at home with Christ.

The Evident Christ

Mark vii. 24.—'He could not be hid.'

THE words of the text are, as it were, a little parenthesis in the gospel story, which is more than an ordinary explanatory note of the occurrence which is recorded. For it is entirely descriptive of the character and nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Evangelist records this fact and characteristic as explaining the difficulty He had in finding quiet retirement. He might go into the desert, or accept the shelter of a disciple's house, but He could not be hidden. There was something about Him which enabled every chance passer-by to recognize Him. And hence these words may well serve us as an indication of the nature of His presence, who is 'the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.'

1. Think, first, of *Jesus in the days of His flesh.* How true this word is—and how surprising! When we think of the lowly human origin of Christ, of the social obscurities which characterized Him, of the startling absence of anything like self-advertising in His work, and, perhaps chiefest of all, of the unstable friendships which He contracted, we wonder more and more how these words could be true—'He could not be hid.' For these are the things that do ordinarily hide men and women—lowly birth, obscure surroundings, weak friendships. These are the very things that in the case of any other one than Jesus would inevitably hide him. And yet, right through His life we know how true this word was. Despite these things, if any one was poor or in want they came to Christ. Despite these things, the rich and high-born, too, came to Him, either openly, as did the young ruler, or under the cover of night, like Nicodemus, to talk with Him concerning things they had heard Him say, to question with Him concerning the deepest things in their being. Even on the Cross of shame He is recognized by His executioners and His fellow-sufferers. There was a something indefinable, an unearthly dignity about Christ which pierced every disguise He might wear, or every circumstance in which He might be placed. There was a kinship with men which only served to reveal His kingship of men.

2. Now think of *Jesus in the world.* The text is as true of the big world of Rome as it had been of the little world of Palestine. 'He could not be hid.' His servants were for the most part poor and uninfluential and untutored men. They went into the great cities of the Roman Empire, carrying the simple message of the

Christ. Everywhere around them was philosophy, and they were ignorant of all philosophies. Everywhere were temples to the gods, and the only temples they had were themselves. Everywhere they were confronted with a powerful faith which was rooted in an immemorial past, and they had to preach the happenings of yesterday—the death of Jesus and the Resurrection. Roman patriotism was against them, for every patriot clung to the old gods. Pride was against them, for it was intolerable that one should worship a Jew who had been crucified. Immorality was rampant everywhere, and superstition was a tremendous power, and every act of soldier or of emperor was inter-penetrated with ancient ritual. What chance had Jesus in a world like that? He had an excellent chance of being buried. Roman historians made so little of Him that they could not even spell His name correctly. It was a gallant sight to see those eastern preachers carrying the message of their Christ abroad; but every one knew that in a dozen years Christ would be buried in oblivion.

Yet the fact is, that is what never happened. In the might of a power that was the power of God, Jesus rose conspicuous in Rome. They tried to hide Him by ignoring Him, but Jesus can never be ignored. They tried it by awful persecution, but persecution was powerless to do it. They tried to hide Him in the cloak of ridicule, wrapping Him in the motley of derision; but the more they tried it, taunting Him with folly, the more He silently showed Himself a King. His name became familiar in the markets. It was whispered by the soldiers in the camp. Where no philosopher had ever entered Christ entered with His power and His peace. Until at last to the remotest west, and from the cottage to the court of Cæsar, there was not a man or woman but had heard of Calvary, and knew the name of Jesus.

And is not the same thing eminently true as we survey the ages till to-day? The verdict of all the centuries is this, that there is that in Jesus which is irrepressible. He has been buried out of sight a thousand times, and a thousand times, when hope was almost dead, the world has learned that He could not be hid. That is the meaning of every revival, when Christ is uplifted and every eye beholds Him. That is the meaning of all social effort, which is so earnest in our land to-day; for it is Christ who is moving in it all, and He cannot be hid. Science has been powerless to hide Him, though it has lengthened time by millions of years. Astronomy has been powerless to hide Him, though it has cast the earth out of her central place. It is to Christ's ideals we still are working. It is by Christ's standards that we still are judging. It is in Christ's spirit that we still are hoping for the weakest and the worst of human kind.

¶ Napoleon, worldling as he was, nevertheless was a great enough soldier and statesman to recognize Christ's kingdom and to appreciate its strength. 'My soldiers have already forgotten me; millions would die for Him. What an abyss between my misery and the eternal reign of Christ!'

¶ In the great uprising in China, where one hardly dared to hope that Christ had found a foothold, thousands of native Christians who heard only a fragment of the Bible—Christians, some of whom had not yet been admitted to our churches, who were scorned by their own people and characterized by certain travellers as 'Christians for revenue'—thousands of such poor Chinese men and women simply died for Christ! The strongest power on this globe to-day, and the growing power of the world, is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.[1]

3. Think, lastly, of *Jesus in the heart.* In the heart within, as in the world without, Jesus cannot be hid. Of course there is a very real sense in which, when He is ours, He is concealed. He is our life—and who can fathom life. Search for it, and it lurks within the shadows. Probe for it with the lancet, and it dies. Of every flower which blossoms that is true; and it is true of every Christian man. There must always be a secret in religion—something we cannot tell to anybody. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him—always a secret between Him and us. And so the Christian has a hidden life, and it is fed by thanksgiving and prayer, and no one shall ever know how deep it is, until the day when secrets are revealed.

But if Christ in the heart is always hidden thus, it is just as true that He cannot be hid. If Christ be in us everything is possible except to hide Him from the light of day. We can never crush Him down and keep Him so. If we

[1] J. W. Bashford, *The Demand for Christ*, 185.

can do it, it is not the Christ. The power of the resurrection is within us, and it is mightier than human weakness. Slowly the Master will reveal Himself, like a root out of dry ground, until at last, over the field of character, there is the swaying of branches in the wind. In one He will be seen in added strength; in another, in unexpected tenderness. One will be filled with a desire to serve; another with a new desire to pray. Some will walk in a new path of rectitude; and some will cease to fret and become happy; and some will no longer be rebellious, but will take up their cross and be at peace. If we have taken Christ to be our own, He will use us, and He will not be hid in us, any more than in the coasts of Sidon.

¶ One of the most interesting astronomical discoveries of the last century was that of the discovery of Neptune. For a long time it was thought that Uranus was the farthest planet from the sun. But there was a strange thing about Uranus. John Couch Adams noticed that the orbit of Uranus was regularly deflected from the normal course; from which he inferred the attraction of some greater hidden body. With the true instinct of the scientist he set himself to find out what the hidden body was which deflected Uranus in this way; and away in the unfathomable blue he discovered a great planet, eighty-five times the size of our earth, which was subsequently called Neptune. He found it because of the attractive influence which that greater body exercised upon the smaller.

CHRIST CHALLENGING FAITH

Mark vii. 26.—'The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.'

If we were to make a list of the cleverest women of the New Testament, the Woman of Samaria and the Woman of Canaan (both of them aliens) would, on any estimate, be high up on the list. For each of them has the original touch of a human nature which engages attention and claims the heart. Besides, as they react to the influence of Jesus, we feel we are getting nearer the great Reality Himself. That is to say, His Personality makes its own deep impression, as He dealt with each of them in the intimacy of private and personal interviews. 'The figures stand out in sharp relief, and the faces reveal all the conflicting passions and changing feelings of the soul.'[1] Further, from these interviews we receive still another portrait of Jesus as He walked among men, the Jesus who is full of grace and truth. And is it too bold to say that, among the conversations of Jesus, even that of the Woman of Samaria must yield the palm to her sister from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; a woman who built a heaven of attainment in earth's despair? Perhaps, as the exposition proceeds, this estimate may not appear too bold or unrestrained.

[1] B. Lucas, *Conversations with Christ*, 5.

I

Difficulty of the Narrative

But at the outset we must take account of the confessed difficulty of the narrative. It is undeniable that on the first blush the story leaves a disturbing impression on every thoughtful reader. Luther perceived this, and many after him have a certain uneasy feeling that some of our Lord's words to the distressed woman are not, to say the least of it, quite in character, and involve a good deal of explanation. Are these the gracious words of Him who said, 'Him that cometh to me (who is on the way to me) I will in no wise cast out'? Let this, however, be said on the other hand, and in the forefront of the inquiry: the very difficulties of the narrative are in themselves a notable guarantee of its authenticity. 'Nobody would have invented such a story as this; nobody *could* have invented it.' If certain phrases in the Gospels may be due to the prepossessions of the Early Church, this is not one of them; for the most clumsy scribe would have hesitated to attribute an attitude so unusual to the Master whom he was glorifying. Imagination and confused memories are responsible for many things, but they are not capable of this.

But let it be said further: as we read the story in St Matthew or St Mark, we are at a serious disadvantage; like one in a room with another who is carrying on a conversation on the telephone with a third party, we hear or overhear only the half of it; that is, in our Lord's interview with the woman we miss the half tones, the manner, the look, and the by-play on the faces of the speakers. Undoubtedly, before the end of the interview, Jesus and the woman so thoroughly understand each other that she is able to answer the challenge He made to her faith. If we may venture to use the word, the interview was entirely successful both to the woman and to our Lord, which, after all, is the best answer to any preliminary difficulty in the story. For, before we have travelled far in it, even this surface uneasiness disappears, and the story rights itself. Leaving this, however, in the meantime, let us come to the matter as it appears in the Gospels.

II

The Setting of the Story

Jesus had gone over the border to the coasts (frontiers) of Tyre and Sidon, to find a refuge, retirement, and rest from the crowds that beset Him. But His fame had preceded Him, and He was met with a genuine cry of human need: a woman came to Him whose daughter was suffering from one of those mysterious nervous maladies (epilepsy or some kindred trouble), which the superstitious thought of the East, its psychology and diagnosis alike, attributed to the agency of evil spirits. This mother, fighting for the life of her child, St Mark says, came to Jesus, pursuing Him from the street into the very house. Here is the poignant picture—a home clouded with a dark shadow, a distressing disease wrecking the life of a beloved, and perhaps an only, child. And when report brought the news that the great Healer had come to her country, unselfish mother-love inspired her boldness and made her 'a woman who would not be denied.' It was a great venture, for everything was against her; her race—she was a Gentile; her knowledge—she had been nurtured in a pagan creed; the disciples—who were hard and unfeeling; and, on the surface, even the Master Himself.[1] But the urge of a woman's heart drove her on. It is a pathetic and moving picture; a woman at Jesus' feet pleading for her daughter's life. Sorrow had brought her there, otherwise she would not have come at all. Sorrow is a great teacher. A Chinese woman is said to have come knocking at the door of a Mission House with the plaintive question, 'Is this the place where they heal broken hearts?' It is.

> Eyes that the preacher could not school
> By wayside graves are raised,
> And men cry God be pitiful
> Who ne'er said God be praised.

But what shall we say of the Master Himself? The woman appealed to Him as 'Son of David,' for the Messianic title had drifted to her ears, though to her it was a name and nothing more. And to this Jesus replied, probing her heart by His suggestion that such a name could mean nothing to her, since it implied that He belonged to the Jews alone. But had she nothing to say for herself, as her very own plea? And then, quick as thought, the woman, recognizing her initial mistake, dropped the Jewish title and appealed to him, 'Lord, help me.' But Jesus said unto her 'Let the children *first* be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.' This is the bare answer stripped of its tone, the smile, and the question behind the words, which is a question both for her and for Him, and especially His problem. For His reply leads us to infer that here again Jesus had before Him the problem and plan of His mission in all its length and breadth. It was a problem for the woman, but also for Him, for His words surely reflect the mood of debate that was passing through the mind of Jesus: Was it thinkable, could it really be in God's intention to refuse this earnest cry for help? Are the gifts of the Kingdom a closed door to all but Jews? The woman is looking eagerly into His face, with eyes of far perception seeing the working of His mind as He asks Himself, Have the love and help of God any barriers at all, of creed or race, of deserving or undeserving? Has not His mercy a wideness like the wideness of the sea?

Apart from the effect of her appeal on the mind of Jesus, may we not infer that in the opening of the conversation He was challenging the woman's faith and the strength of it, and,

[1] *Cf.* G. H. Morrison, *Highways of the Heart*, 192.

so to say, leading her on step by step? And to test her, quoting a Jewish proverb which had sprung out of the racial bitterness and exclusiveness of Judaism, He said, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs.' A *proverb*, let us remember, which He merely reported as what people say. This is what His words said, while His look, His eyes, and His smile asked: 'Is it?' 'What do you make of that?'

We have called this the challenge and trial of earnest faith, and in illustration of the method we take from modern biography an interesting parallel. When Stanley was starting on one of his journeys to Africa, he was importuned by a man in London to take him on his staff. But the explorer felt, 'I was not sure of him, and to test him I spoke coldly, saying, "Well, if you like to follow me to Cairo and speak to me there, I may have an answer for you."' And the man stood the test, appeared in Cairo, was taken on, and proved entirely capable and fit. He had answered the challenge. And so did the woman. With her clever mother-heart made wise by love, she saw her opportunity, read the smile on His face and the intention of His soul, as their eyes met across the room. She had her assurance. It was like this: a woman was asked why she had come to the Sacrament, and what reception she expected, and she replied, 'He looked at me, and I looked at Him, and that was welcome enough.' And in this conversation with the woman of Canaan which he records, St Mark, who gives us the content of the original Gospel, reports the woman's answer to our Lord's quotation of the proverb. He had virtually asked, 'Is it fit to give the children's bread to the dogs,' and she replied, '*Nai*, yes, it is.' 'Truth, Lord' is the rendering in the A.V., but there is much to be said for taking the interjection '*Nai*' as an affirmation of the question under dispute. 'Yes it is, for even the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.' She too is in the house, and in a great house like His, no one, not even the humblest, goes without their portion. The answer opened every door in the heart of Jesus, all barriers were down, if we can speak of barriers at all. For Jesus saw what kind of woman she was; and her reply brought to Him one of the hours of the Son of Man when He rejoiced in spirit, and deep called to deep as He replied, 'O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Our Lord's eulogy of the men of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. xi. 21, 22) may reflect the cup of pure joy which He drank that day at the hands of a woman.

III

The Lessons of the Story

We may turn now to the lessons of the story, which are timeless in their application to the religious life, and raise questions that are vital for the Church to hear and answer.

1. *The Place of Faith in the Mind of Jesus.*—Jesus is always speaking of faith, seeking for it, chiding its absence, and praising its presence. And in respect of this story we quote Principal Cairns: 'Surely the whole point of it is, that when Christ finds that vital thing, faith, even in a woman outside the historic Covenant, He grants to her the hidden wealth of the Kingdom, even as to His own countrymen. We have here the germ of the whole Pauline universalism, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was healed from that hour.'[1] This saving faith is not assent to a creed, though it were the greatest; faith is welcoming God with a warm, loving heart, opening all the doors of life to Him, and giving Him a free entrance. 'The creative power of faith is man's co-operation with God, or rather man's receptiveness of God,' and in the gospel story 'both the sin within man, *and* the tragic element in human life, are regarded as alike spheres of conquest by the victorious energy of faith.'[2] That is to say, both worlds, the world within and the world without, are amenable and subject to the power, the efficiency, and sufficiency of faith.

'I go to prove my soul,' we seem to hear the woman say as she reaches from point to point. A light has begun to break for her while she is being led on to the further adventure of putting everything to the touch to lose or win. And the light leads her to the door. (Cf. *Pilgrim's Progress.*)

'A light has begun to break upon him, which is hidden from those who dwell at peace in the city of Destruction. He has known enough to go outside its gates and look to the horizon. And his first need is for more light. He begins to ask questions. *Is* there any heal-

[1] *The Faith that Rebels*, 74. [2] *Op. cit.*, 71, 72.

ing? *Can* my broken life be made whole again? *Is* loss, bereavement, failure, the last word in my history? Or are there grounds for believing that they are but ways of awakening my soul and revealing an eternally benevolent will?'[1]

Resourceless, and without any claim but the smallest (as she allows), the woman risks all on the newly discovered truth that the universe to which she appeals is essentially and through and through friendly to her. And with this in her heart she has really entered into the Kingdom, to take and use the powers which that Kingdom brings to such as can receive and use them. Such is the meaning of our Lord's answer, 'For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.' That is to say, her words express the new character to which she has attained; the persuasion which has satisfied her of His real goodness of heart out of which no denial could come. She has received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to open every door. Or, as we say in modern speech, she has reached the abiding conviction that the power outside her little world is friendly to her, and even actively on her side. In face of this discovery even the miracle in itself pales in significance, and becomes the symbol and sacrament of the great essential in religion—that we are not living in a closed world, with doors barred and bolted, but in a world whose doors great and small fly open to the touch of a faith that brings us into communion with the world's Maker; and His hands are not tied, for He moves about freely in His universe, whose winds and waves obey His will, and He is not a prisoner in His own creation. Faith, therefore, is not a charm or a magic *sesame* to open the door, but communion with the living Lord and Lover of men. 'If we come to Him we must believe that He really is, and that He *does* reward those who seek Him' (Heb. xi. 6).

It may be objected, however, that this is a mere hypothesis; yes, it is a venture into the unseen in the belief that there is Somebody there, an ear that hears, and a heart that can understand. And it is not only religious but scientific to say—

> The abyss is worth a leap, however wide,
> When life, sweet life, is on the other side.

Nor should we be disturbed by the thought of faith as a hypothesis, for it is along this road that science also has found the most precious discoveries; 'and the experience that the scientific man prizes most highly is that which places his hypothesis under the severest test.' So with the Woman of Canaan. It is said of Lord Kelvin that, while pursuing his researches into the furthest bounds of the known, he always found that the last step was a daring leap into the *unknown* after a truth which had to be verified afterwards under the stress and strain of the severest tests. And it is not pressing the illustration too far if we say that Christ's method and the woman's reaction to it are crucial instances of the same kind of thing, of a faith that is being drawn on and drawn out to venture even into the unseen. Here we see a woman greatly daring, who in the Gospels stands among the first of those 'who ever burst into that silent sea,' a pioneer of faith who went out into the thick darkness, and found God there. As we read her story she stands on the threshold of an amazing discovery—

> Jesus, I am resting, resting
> On the joy of what Thou art;
> I am finding out the greatness
> Of Thy loving heart.

2. *The Perseverance of Faith.*—Here is a woman that cannot be denied. We have seen that her story found its place in the earliest *memorabilia* of Jesus, because faith is the vital thing. But it teaches also how attainment comes only to a faith that perseveres. The Woman of Canaan embodies in the flesh that word of Jesus 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force.' 'It is being stormed by enthusiastic, but unorthodox people,' publicans, harlots, Canaanites, and all who, in Jewish exclusiveness, are beyond the pale. There are people, Jesus said, who are fighting their way into the Kingdom, past all discouragements and handicaps, and no one is able to bar them from their portion. Of all such the Syrophenician is a shining example. Fightings within and repulses without are only the spur to her endeavour. 'Who would true valour see, let him come hither.'

But a great deal of religion becomes hopeless and helpless because we do not keep it up; or, as one says, 'Men who have once attained to God fall from Him because they cleave to Him with their weakness and not with their might.'

[1] Sir Henry Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, 10.

They set out in their quest for the one peerless pearl, but give up too soon, whereas if they had pressed on, it was waiting to be found round the next bend of the road. How often Jesus speaks of the importunity which finds its reward at last! It is not too much to say that perseverance in religion is a leading thought in His mind; for to reinforce the virtue there are the parables of the Friend at Midnight and the Importunate Widow, while there is the warning of the Plower who turns back, and of the Seeds and the Soils which picture the shallow-hearted who flame up into enthusiasms, but 'have no root in themselves,' and are changeable according to the times, as the meaning appears to be. But the Woman of Canaan goes on in the road where all great souls go. Keeping step with the Master Himself, she knows that He is calling, challenging, and daring her to follow. And she will take nothing but the highest—

> Thou art coming to a King,
> Large petitions with thee bring.

The lure of the second best does not appeal to her, for she is in line with that Unwritten Saying of Jesus which is so strictly in character that it identifies itself: 'Ask for the big things, and the little ones shall be added unto you.' This woman belongs to that great company—may their tribe increase—who are ready to give the utmost for the highest. Surely Jesus' exultant cry of joy at her faith is called out by this quality, that here is one who had caught a glimpse of His greatness and power which made her bold to ask what seemed an impossible boon, and to expect everything from a great Saviour. She refused to take a denial, and would accept nothing but the gift she had come for. It is Carey's motto, 'Expect great things from God,' or Bunyan's venture for life, 'If I die, I die at Thy door, if I sink, I sink in Thy ship.'

3. *The Inspiration of her Prayer.*—A preacher gives the incident this title 'A Woman's Faith and its Reward.' When the books are opened it will be told how many homes have been saved for time and eternity because in them there was a woman who dared great things for her children, and set her expectations steadily on the highest. It is told of the mother of Phillips Brooks, America's great preacher, that by faith and prayer and work she brought every one of her sons into the Kingdom. And when, after her death, the family gathered to find an epitaph appropriate for such a life, with the inspiration of religious genius and filial piety they chose the words of Jesus, 'O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee according as thou wilt.' It was at once the acknowledgment of a debt which could never be paid, and the reward of faith and devotion. And, in comparison with this pure fame, how poor everything else is that a woman can receive as the wages of life—to set the feet of the next generation on the steps of a nobler life. Many other things will be forgotten, while this remains to smell sweet and blossom in the dust of the ages.

W. M. Grant.

Ephphatha

Mark vii. 34.—'Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.'

From the borders of Tyre and Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, right across the country, our Lord went, and wheresoever He went He found people who had need of Him, and whosoever asked His help found it. Human helplessness and need pressed on Him wheresoever He went, and appealed to His compassion. Not merely to His compassion, but to His helpfulness. So, when they brought to Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and besought Him to lay His hand on him, our Lord listened to them. This man could not hear what his fellows said. That gateway of knowledge was shut. Nor could he communicate to his fellows anything of what he felt, thought, and desired. Such a maimed life appealed to Jesus. 'And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue.'

But it is the further action in healing the man that we are to consider—'Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, Be opened'—as it shows us not only Christ's methods of redeeming men, but how we must imitate Him if our service is to be the channel of His power.

1. First, then, note *the Christ that prays.* Before the deed of power, we mark that word of description, 'He looked up to heaven.' The glance and thought passed in a moment, yet in

the chain of action it was a vital link. You stand in the engine-room of an ironclad waiting for the signal to go ahead, and at the sharp ring of the telegraph the man beside you touches a handle, scarcely distinguishable in the array of screws and levers; but the movement has liberated mighty forces; and immediately great pistons begin to quiver, and monster shafts to revolve, and the huge vessel goes forging out to sea. That movement, slight yet so effectual, is prayer. It was so even in Christ's life. His concord with the Divine will being absolute, prayer gave Him control of infinite energies, and He used them to realize the great wise purposes of redemption, and fill the empty lives of men.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parchèd grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee? [1]

The habitual dependence of Jesus Christ on prayer is clear in every line of the Gospels. It was His custom, as we know, in the loneliness of His life, to retire from all other fellowship and to spend the night alone with God. But here it was a swift upward look and a swift answer, nor was He alone when He breathed this prayer. There was the patient standing a yard off, with his listless, bewildered face, and a crowd of onlookers edging always nearer. And it was from close beside men, with the multitude pressing round, that Christ lifted up His heart to the Father, and took from Him power to do His blessed work. Time is not of the essence of communion. It may be hours, it may be in a flash; the essential thing is that there be communion. It is a strange idea that prayer is to be kept for brief, strictly fenced-off periods of the day; and that a stray petition which finds its way into working hours is no better than a trespasser, out of bounds and out of place. In that there is very little wisdom. Would we treat an intimate friend like that, giving him one spell of conversation before breakfast and another after supper, but in the interval declining once to open our lips? And if we would not, who is a friend like God or can come so near? In an instant, wherever we are, threading our way along the street, or talking in the family circle, we may pass from the world into the sanctuary, and, like Jesus, be alone with God. Temptation can do very little harm to the man who has mastered that secret.

[1] R. C. Trench.

¶ In company, on the street, in the railway train, in the bustle of business, amidst the solemn fervours of his preaching, and in the very torrent of his own quaint, racy, picturesque talk in social life—in short, everywhere and in all things, his faith went up to heaven in quick, pointed, battle-like cries. When others were preaching we have often heard him praying thus, 'Help, Lord, help! Give the blessing and save many!' [1]

2. Again, note *the Christ that pities.* 'Looking up to heaven, he sighed.' One knows instinctively the feeling which wrung that sigh from Him. It was compassion—compassion for a frail, darkened, broken human life. He felt the pathos of things; the deep insights of love revealed to Him the neglect and emptiness and pain of this man's history, for in that age such as he had a cruel lot. Here moved the edge of the dark shadow cast by the suffering that engulfs the world on every side, and in the background hung the darker shadow still of sin. So now, like that other day by the graveside of Lazarus in Bethany, Jesus felt overwhelmingly the pitiful estate of man's weakness, and the hostile power of the wasting foes that prey on life. Beside the tomb of His dead friend, Jesus thought on all these things and wept; and in pity, now, He sighed.

¶ We can, indeed, only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain

[1] J. Macpherson, *Duncan Matheson*, 39.

by its being what we should choose before everything.[1]

The practical maxim that emerges here is plain. Express it as you may, it comes to this, that compassion is an unconditional prerequisite of spiritual helpfulness. There must be something in the worker for God's Kingdom—preacher, evangelist, visitor, keeper of the night-refuge—akin to the pity that from all eternity throbbed in the heart of Jesus Christ.

Jesus touched this deaf and dumb man, and how deep often is the significance of a touch. It is the symbol of brotherhood, love, companionship; it throws a bridge from soul to soul, and across there troop messages of sympathy and kind affection. Friendship is begun when man has touched man, for through that electric contact the sense goes thrilling of frank good-will and a kindred mind.

¶ Sir Frederick Treves, in his book of literary sketches taken from his medical experience, tells the story of a man afflicted with a dreadful disease which made him a kind of human monster. He was known as the 'Elephant man,' and when Treves came across him first, he was being shown for a few coppers somewhere in the East End of London—the very picture of dejection and despair. Later on, when he was cast on the streets, a place was found for him, through the kindness of the surgeon, in the London Hospital. At first it was difficult to make him feel that anyone cared. His 'fear of people's eyes, the dread of being always stared at, the lash of the cruel mutterings of the crowd' were with him still. The attention of the nurses doing their difficult work was rather formal. 'They did not help him to feel that he was of their kind; on the contrary, they, without knowing it, made him aware that the gulf of separation was immeasurable.' Then came a lady who at the surgeon's request came into his room, wished him good morning, and shook him by the hand. He burst into tears. It was the first time a woman had smiled on him, the first time one had taken him by the hand. From that time his transformation from a hunted beast into a man began. And it was completed when one day Queen Alexandra paid him a special visit. She entered his room smiling, shook him by the hand, and talked to him as a person she was glad to see. After that everything was changed. He used to remark, 'I am happy every hour of the day.'[1]

In touching the man do we not see, in a parable, just what Jesus did for all the world? When He came from the heights of glory into the temptations and sorrows of our life, it was in order that He might be very near us. He touched us that He might grasp our fallen manhood and lift it up. Nothing less than contact with the lost would serve. All the wonder of the Incarnation is, as in a figure, wrapped and enveloped in that one simple act—He touched him.

It is a simple act; yet is it not one that men are often curiously reluctant to do for one another? Very little efficacy or attraction resides in the philanthropy, or even the evangelism, that stands a good way off and addresses the hearer from the safe distance of holier beings. The zeal that is copious in good advice, but would be alarmed or shocked at the idea of personal contact with the fallen, is not that which devotion to Jesus Christ kindles, or which takes His life for model. There is but one way to help those who need help: to stand at their side, and get hold of their hand, and look into their eyes with unaffected good-will. The touch is the secret of the cure.

¶ It was said of William Ross, a Scottish evangelist, that there was a 'benediction in his hand.' As he laid it on the shoulder of some poor reprobate, he was made to feel that he was not utterly beyond social recognition.[2]

3. Lastly, note *the Christ that commands*. 'He saith unto him, Be opened.' Is not this the difference between our sympathy and Christ's; ours is but a hope and longing, His can save? And He knew it well; nay, it was the sovereign consciousness of power to speak the liberating word that made His pity, for all its intensity, so calm. The mastery of things was His. Is there anything in history even faintly resembling the attitude of Jesus Christ to human need. Mark, it is not the attitude of inquiry; He does not ask questions; the extent, the malignity of the disease are all known before one word is spoken. It is still less the attitude of suggestion; no tentative, cautious diagnosis is offered, no conjecture, no easy promise that if one remedy fail, some other will be tried.

[1] George Eliot, *Romola*.

[1] J. Reid, *In Touch with Christ*, 14.

[2] *Life of Rev. William Ross, of Cowcaddens, Glasgow.*

Rather it is the attitude of conscious royal command, that utters the very voice of God, and knows that failure is the one thing that cannot be. The word of Christ is a word creative and infallible.

Now that is Christ's prerogative still; for Him to speak and to do are always one. And he says to His followers: All power is given unto *Me*; go *ye*, therefore. Like Him we may gain power by prayer, like Him we may pity the sinful and touch the needy, like Him we may speak the word of Divine power over guilt and woe. Remember it is the service He appointed us.

The Sigh of the Eternal

Mark vii. 34.—'He sighed.'

It never occurred to St Mark to tell us why Jesus sighed. Yet we can scarcely read the story without pausing to wonder why. A sigh is not what the story had led us to expect.

Mark does not stop to explain the deeds of Jesus. He tells us what He did and leaves us to seek for the explanation ourselves. This is true of the four evangelists; but of the other three it may be said that they have some special view of Jesus and are anxious that we should see that what He said and did supported their view. But Mark has no special view, he only wants us to see Jesus. He splashes in the local colour, and is lavish with adverbs of time, place, and manner.

It is commonly believed that Mark was Simon Peter's amanuensis. He wrote what Peter told him about Jesus. There is a scrap of ancient writing still extant which makes that statement. It is a well-authenticated tradition. If Mark's Gospel is Simon Peter's description of Jesus, it is exactly what we might have expected from him. Not a reflective man was Simon Peter; very quick, observant, a man of action rather than of meditation. There was nothing that Jesus did that he did not see. There was nothing that Jesus said that he did not hear. One seems to hear him dictating to John Mark, 'Write, "He looked up to heaven with a sigh."' Mark says, 'But why did He sigh?' and Peter says, 'Never mind about that; He did sigh, I heard Him, write it down.' So there it is written that Jesus sighed, and generations of loving students of the Bible have paused to ask why, and perhaps that is better than if Peter had told us why, even supposing he had known himself.

1. Part of the fascination of the mind of the Master is the impression we have that He saw more than we see, He heard more than we hear. Simon Peter saw a dumb man, but what did Jesus see? Simon Peter heard that he had an impediment in his speech, but what did Jesus hear?

Everything that is, is profound, its roots run down into infinity. We see things, but do we see into them? We hear things, but do we hear the totality of their sound? We know that the faculty of hearing varies with every one of us. We know that there are creatures, some of which we consider inferior to ourselves, which have a sense of hearing much more acute than our own. Who could hear the totality of the sound of the universe?

¶ George Eliot has a wonderful passage in which she says: 'That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.'[1]

Joy has its voice as well as sorrow, and if the whole sound of the universe could be heard would it not be a joyous one? But can we say that about the whole voice of this world? Is not its undertone like the pattering of tears? It can never have been intended that we should go the whole way through life with dry eyes.

Jesus might easily have sighed where other people would have laughed; He heard more than others, He saw more than others. He was as sensitive as an aspen leaf, He was as strong as an oak. His is the quivering Life that makes contact with all life, the Sorrow that merges with all sorrow, and the Joy that sings with all joy. He holds us and haunts us by the utter fullness of His life. And yet His dominant note was joy and not sorrow. There is scarcely any thought more comforting than that He sometimes was sad when other people

[1] Middlemarch.

were glad, and glad when other people were sad, because while they saw things He saw into them.

2. We notice that He '*looked up to heaven and sighed.*' It was when His soul went out to be with God and to feel for God that the wave of pathos rolled over Him. What if omnipotence means omni-sensitiveness? It must be so if God is Judge. Somewhere in the heart of the universe there ought to be a just judge. There is not one on earth, and the reason is that we do not see everything, we do not hear everything. Somewhere in the heart of the universe, if there be a Judge at all, He must be omnisensitive; He must see the totality of vision; He must hear the totality of sound.

Goethe has said that 'there is something in every man which if you knew you would hate him for it,' and Hodgson, commenting on that saying, said, 'Rather would I say, there is something in every man which if you knew you would love him for it.' What a merciful thought, what a merciful dream, what a merciful truth it is that God is Love. That inspired Roman Catholic, Faber, sings:

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

It is well that we are growing through that idea of God's omnipotence which has made it almost impossible to think helpfully of Him. We are so mean in our outlook that when we think of omnipotence the only impression it conveys to our mind is of arbitrary power. If God is omnipotent, why does He allow certain things to happen? But it may be that omnipotence is omni-sensitiveness. It may be that all-power has to be held in check by all-sensitiveness, and that God's burden is the greatest burden of all because there comes up to His throne the many-tongued sound of this complex world.

Thou with strong prayer and very much entreating
Willest be asked, and thou shalt answer then,
Show the hid heart beneath creation beating,
Smile with kind eyes and be a man with men.

Were it not thus, O King of my salvation,
Many would curse to thee and I for one,
Fling thee thy bliss and snatch at thy damnation,
Scorn and abhor the shining of the sun,

Ring with a reckless shivering of laughter,
Wroth at the woe which thou hast seen so long,
Question if any recompense hereafter
Waits to atone the intolerable wrong.

It is inexpressibly significant and awe-inspiring that Jesus the Christ, the nearest to God this world ever housed, should feel that touch of sorrow as He lifted up His eyes to heaven and shared in the fellowship of the great All-seeing and All-hearing Creator.

3. To the man who was deaf He said, Ephphatha, which means Be opened! It is a God-like word and worthy of Him who speaks supremely in the name of God. It is suggestive of the Divine purpose of revelation to the sons of men.

'Let there be light' is the first audible word that the old Book ascribes to God. 'Be opened!' is the word the Creator speaks as He evolves the cosmos out of chaos. Be opened! as the revelation of the Divine thought proceeds, when the green grass carpets the land, when life makes its appearance in the sea, on the land, and in the air. Be opened! as there comes into being at last a creature capable of entering into fellowship with Himself. Be opened! is the cry of history, as it unrolls its long scroll and makes legible to man the law of everlasting righteousness. Be opened! is the challenging voice of science, as she penetrates without fear into all the recesses of the earth and daily brings into view wonders which man never creates but only discovers, the secrets of the All-supreme hidden until the time of their revealing.

Be opened! is the word of the Christ Himself, nearest to God even as He is nearest to man. Be opened! is the long, low cry of His Cross, revealing the depth of human sin. Be opened! is the appeal of all the voices of brotherhood, calling for light to penetrate our darkness and dispense our prejudices, that we may discover our common humanity. Be opened! is the triumphant voice of death itself, rending the last great veil which shrouds from our view the larger purposes of God.

This progressive opening up of His Creation by the All-seeing, All-hearing, All-feeling Creator is the great Divine drama of the ages in which we play our little part and of which we catch our fleeting vision.

Pray that the Divine light may come to our blind eyes, that our ears may be unstopped to receive His message, so that these voices of ours may not cry with the inarticulate cry of mere animal life, but become vibrant and vocal with the accents of the sons and daughters of God.

'Ephphatha, be thou opened!' So Love spoke.
And lo! the lips, once mute, were tuned to praise,
The ears, once dull and heavy, in amaze
Heard the low whisper that upon them broke:
Hearts, bitter-hard and cold, were set afire,
And eyes, long dim, were opened to the light,
And halting footsteps quickened with delight
As Love breathed into Life his pure desire.
And lo (even as of old) Love speaks to me
In holy accents, bidding my soul arise;
His holy touch is laid even upon me,
And lips and ears are opened, and dull eyes,
And all my soul, responding to Love's voice,
Wakens to life, love, praise, at his:—'Rejoice'![1]

As We Draw the Water Rises

Mark viii. 4, 5.—'And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.'

THE record of the Feeding of the Four Thousand brings before us in a striking light the twofold aspect of our Lord's miracles. They are at once works and lessons, or, to use the language of the apostles, they are 'powers' and 'signs.' The 'powers' of Christ claim to take their proper place among the events of history, as deeds truly wrought for men and among men. But this is not all: they are lessons also, pregnant with a peculiar meaning. Each miracle is an acted parable—a sermon addressing us not merely by the lively scene of imagination, but by the realities of life. The spiritual sense of the miracles, then, is not a mere accommodation, but belongs to their very essence.

1. This question of the disciples is one which we often ask, at least in spirit: 'Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?' It appears to us impossible to fulfil Christ's commands. We plead the magnitude of the work, the apparent absurdity of the idea, the hopelessness of it considering our miserable resources; when the real fact is we have fallen out of communion with the living God. And in our Lord's swift reply, 'How many loaves have ye?' we hear God's eternal rebuke of our faint-heartedness, His penetrating exposure of the source of all our slackness and inability. The difficulties of the human situation arise from our personal doubt with regard to God. In these words of the disciples we have the reluctance and spirit of discussion which rise to the surface when God lays some command upon our souls: and in our Lord's reply we have the answer which the eternal spirit of good urges at the very moment. 'Wilt Thou be silent for ever, O Lord?' we cry as we look out upon things as they are. 'Do thine own part,' is the only answer from the heavens.

Jesus did not ask the disciples to feed the four thousand. He asked them to bring out such bread as they had. He did not ask them to do everything at once: He asked them to do something, to begin. Now that is all God asks of us: but He looks for that. It is as we do what we can that more gets done than we ever could have done: for there God finds His opportunity through us. If we consider for a moment we shall see that great results are accomplished, rather they accomplish themselves, when we do our small but necessary part. It is as if there lay behind us and within all things and all souls a great sea of power, the unfathomed energy of God, which by our willingness or unwillingness we let loose or hinder. We find examples everywhere. A little child at a certain age feels the instinct to walk. But he cannot. Does he therefore do nothing at all, because he cannot do everything at once? No! he does his best. He tries; and by trying he puts himself in touch with secret forces which are lying in wait to assist him. He does what he can, and soon he can do more. Meanwhile, his weakness, his untrained eye, his unsteady limbs all seem to say that he can never attain to such an enterprise as walking.

The same thing happens when a young mind faces the world of knowledge, when he begins to read, to reckon, to think. There is a sense of pain. The demand is too great. The young

[1] Margaret Blaikie, *Songs by the Way*, 24.

mind feels itself depressed and timid before the sudden task. Looking into the new world of things to be learned the child is confused, and at a loss: he feels himself stupid and unfit. But his teacher does not say he must overtake all that in a day. No, he gives the child a small task, small but definite, a task which tries all the powers he meanwhile has. The child is asked to learn something, and, when he has learned that, he is capable of more. He is like a man climbing a mountain. Each step he takes is not only a step towards the top, it also shows him more of the world. He sees a village that lay hidden, or the windings of a river, or the smoke of some far-off city, or, on the horizon, the sea. So each step a child takes into his own small world of learning is not merely a new fact received but also a new power acquired. At each the child not only grows in knowledge, but acquires through all these small successes the feeling that, infinite as is this world which is yet to be known by him, somehow he is equal to the task. In short, by doing the definite thing he could, he finds he can do more. In that first feeling of difficulty and bewilderment, when the child settled down to his wide and hopeless task, we have the very mood of the disciples here.

We see the principle underlying the complaint of the disciples and our Lord's answer. 'There's too much to be done,' we say, and our Lord answers, 'Are you doing your part?' We sometimes feel that things seem to be going from bad to worse, but swift on the back of that thought there comes the earnest questioning, if we will only stay and listen, 'Am I doing my share of the work; am I myself living entirely on the side of God!' Or the secret controversy may be concerned not so much with the human situation as with our own personal life. Or we may be in that mood which exaggerates the difficulties in the way of faith in God. 'We cannot know God to perfection,' we say; 'how can we ever be quite sure?' But we feel ourselves answered from within: 'Be true to what you do know about God. Follow the light which is never quite absent from simple and obedient souls.'

¶ Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket-gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate.[1]

¶ What an illuminating experience that was in the life of George John Romanes when unaware of the existence of any remaining faith in him the idea flashed through his mind that he knew his absent mother loved him, though as a scientist he could not see, or weigh, or touch that love. But though that love could not be handled, he believed in it, and if he believed in that unseen love why might he not also believe in the love of the unseen God? He took that little bit of an idea of a mother's love, and followed it up, and that idea so followed up brought him into faith in God.[2]

2. Let us see for a moment how this principle works in certain cases.

(1) For example, there is some one, let us suppose, who feels that he is very far from the style and tone of life which he should be leading. We know quite well how we *are living*, and we know how we ought to be living. But we feel the Christian demand for character, for quality of life, to be too great. Now, if we apply the principle of our Lord's words here it will test our sincerity. The disciples could not feed the four thousand, and yet, as it turned out, they did not know how many they could feed until they began to give away what they had. They found—what we are always finding when we allow our good inspirations to carry us so far—they found that they never came to the end of the bread they had to give away! If we would take one real step, even a short one, we will be amazed at the new world which will break upon us, at the new spiritual joys which will greet us. Cross the frontier by even one step, and we find ourselves in a new climate, a new world, a new air, with a new sense of ourselves, a new idea of all that by the same grace of God we are capable of.

We cannot be everything that Christ wants us to be. But, begin anywhere. There is deep truth in an old saying of the Greek moralists, that if you really have one virtue you have all the virtues. It would help many of us out of that vague sense of helplessness before all the requirements of a religious life, if we set ourselves to master faithfully one requirement. It is one sign that religion is

[1] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
[2] J. G. K. M'Clure.

becoming a real and personal thing with us when we are candid enough to cry to God for the very thing we know we need, and judge ourselves according to the measure in which we have triumphed over that one besetting sin.

(2) Again, there may be some one who feels prompted to begin a new life; but he is afraid he might not be able to hold out for long. It is true courage to be rightly afraid. Still, to these the Good Spirit says, 'How many loaves have ye?' And once more we do not know just now how God will help us further on. Our faith is a lamp to our feet. As we go forward, it goes forward. Is not that enough? The feet of the priests were in the Jordan before the waters separated and a pathway appeared. So God works always. 'He shows sufficient of His light for us in the dark to rise by.' But this principle has applications in every region of our life; for indeed it is our peculiar discipline and task in this world—to grow, to learn, to rise, to become. It is a kind and gracious principle; it is a comforting promise to everyone who is in earnest. It tells us that there is no end to what we may attain in the way of character and beauty of soul; that we have always something more to give so long as we keep on giving; that the water rises in the well the more, the more we draw; that there is no limit or end to any faculty of the soul which meanwhile we are exercising, or devoting to a cause.

3. But the words of this text are not only kind, they are searching too. Surely it all means that we should make no insincere excuses for not doing as we ought to do and not living as we ought to live. We say that we cannot do everything, but our Lord, speaking in the deep places of our spirit says, 'Do something.' We say that we cannot be saints. And He says, 'Set yourself against even one sin.' We do not see how the whole world is ever to be brought to the knowledge of Christ. And yet Christ saw quite plainly how the whole world could be saved. And even we begin to see how it can be done whenever we meet another one who sees. And if this hope for the whole human family be a dream, it was never our dream. It was the dream of Jesus, the dream which in His life and in His death He obeyed as being the very truth of things.

The Thankfulness of Jesus

Mark viii. 6.—'And he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks.'

Matt. xi. 25.—'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

Everyone who knows the New Testament knows how the apostolic life abounded in praise. It runs like some singing river through all their changing days. And where did they learn the habit? They got it from their Lord. The Master's habit must have made a profound impression upon them. There must have been something very distinct and distinctive about it. We are told that the two disciples journeying to Emmaus after the awful happenings in Jerusalem recognized their risen Lord when He began to give thanks. 'He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.' They knew Him by His gratitude and by the manner in which He expressed it. He was recognized by His praise.

1. Now, let us look at the first text. 'And he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks.' That is to say, our Lord took commonplace, common bread, and associated it with God, and it was no longer a commonplace. He gave thanks, and in the recognition the common was revealed as the Divine. The ordinary meal became a sacrament with the Unseen Presence as real as we apprehend Him at the table of the Lord.

The man who feels the Divine relationships of bread will have a very transfigured road. A man whose praise is elicited by loaves will also be thankful for the cornfield, the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, for the reapers who gather the corn, for the touch of God in the labourer, and for the millstones which grind the corn that makes the bread. He who took the loaves and gave thanks would also give thanks for the common lily of the field, the daisy of His native land. Indeed we may truly say that the Master's habit of praise made every common thing radiant, and every wayside bush became aflame with God. He breathed His music of gratitude through the commonest reeds.

Now, unless His disciples can do the same, unless we can touch and feel God in the commonplaces, He is going to be a very infrequent and unfamiliar Guest. For life is made up of very

ordinary experiences. Now and again a novelty leaps into the way, but the customary tenor is rarely broken. It is the ordinary stars that shine upon us night after night; it is only occasionally that a comet comes our way. Look at some of the daily commonplaces—health, sleep, bread and butter, work, friendship, a few flowers by the wayside, the laughter of children, the ministry of song, the bright day, the cool night—if we do not perceive God in these things we have a very unhallowed and insignificant road. On the other hand, the man who discovers the Divine in a loaf of bread, and lifts his song of praise, has a wonderful world, for Divinity will call to him on every side.

¶ Two men meet and greet one another in an Edinburgh street. A common enough occurrence, truly; and one which ninety-nine out of every hundred of the passers-by would never notice. But a man of thankfulness—Robert Louis Stevenson—sees it with other eyes, and writes: 'They came forward with a little run and *leaped* at each other's hands.'[1]

We can begin to cultivate the Master's habit in no better way than by beginning with daily bread. Because if we begin with bread, we cannot possibly end there. If we see one commonplace lit up with God, other commonplaces will begin to be illumined, until life will be like some city seen from a height by night, with all the common lamps in the common streets burning and shining with mystic flame. So let us begin with bread. But let us give thanks reverently, not with the sudden tap and the sharp, superficial sentence of a public dinner. Let us do it quietly, apprehendingly, with an effort to realize the presence of the awful, gracious, merciful God. And let us do it without formality, and seeking deliverance from the perilous opiate of words. Let us change our phraseology, let us sometimes bow in silence, and share the significant, worshipful stillness of the Friends.

2. Let us watch our Master again and listen to His praise. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Our Master thanks the Father that spiritual secrets are not the perquisites of culture, that it is not by cleverness that we gain access to the Kingdom of Grace.

Out of six men only one may be clever, only one may have the advantage of knowledge, but all six may have the elementary simplicities of a child. All cannot be 'knowing,' but all can be teachable. All cannot be 'learned,' but all can be trustful. All cannot attain to mental sovereignty, but all may have love. And it is upon what all may have that our Lord fixes His eye; it is the common denominator for which He offers His praise. He takes bread, the commonplace of life, and gives thanks; He takes the child, the commonalty among men, and gives thanks. He offers praise for the commonplaces and the commonalties. To give thanks for commonplaces makes a transfigured world; to give thanks for commonalties makes a transfigured race. The one unveils the world as our Father's house; the other unveils the race as our Father's family.

Would it not be good to exercise ourselves in that form of praise? Would it not be wise to allow our minds to rove over the race of men irrespective of class and condition, and search out the commonalties and sing our song of praise? One thing such praise would do for us. It would preserve in our minds a vivid sense of the relative values of things. We should recognize that academic learning is not to be mentioned in comparison with lowliness, that earthly power has not the holy standing of meekness, and that mere eminence is not to be counted in the same world with love. What we may have in common with the poorest and most ignorant is our most precious possession.

¶ 'I used to judge the worth of a person,' writes George Gissing, 'by his intellectual power and attainment. I could see no good where there was no logic, no charm where there was no learning. Now I think that one has to distinguish between two forms of intelligence, that of the brain and that of the heart, and I have come to regard the second as by far the more important.'

[1] C. G. Lang.

Faith and External Evidence

Mark viii. 11, 12.—'And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.'

THE Pharisees' request was not in itself an unreasonable one. It was made in an unfriendly spirit, but this need not necessarily have been the case. For see how the matter stood. Much of Christ's teaching was novel and even revolutionary. He paid small regard to the traditional system of which the Pharisees were the recognized exponents. And He acted thus without any apparent doubt or hesitancy. He spoke as One who had a right to do so. What were the grounds of this authority? What were the credentials on which He depended? If He could not produce such, or if they were seen to be unsatisfactory, He stood self-condemned. Let Him declare Himself. One such method of proof suggested itself. By some striking act of supernatural power He could show that He was not as other men are—that He stood in a relationship to God different from that in which they stood, and was entitled to declare God's Will to them in terms which they could not ignore.

1. The Pharisees' request was not in itself unreasonable or unnatural. Our Lord Himself recognized the legitimacy of the attitude it expressed by the performance of numerous miracles, which He referred to as proofs of His Divine nature and claims. When John the Baptist sent disciples to ask Him the crucial question, 'Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?' His reply was, 'Go tell John what ye have heard and seen; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.' Here in the most unmistakable manner He pointed to signs of the kind which the Pharisees asked for; demonstrations in the outer world of Nature of His Divine origin and authority. But on this occasion He refused to give any such demonstration. What was the significance of this refusal?

The difference between our Lord's treatment of the Pharisees and of the messengers of John was plainly due, not to the character of their requests, for these were practically identical, but to the spirit in which those requests were made. John was friendly disposed. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had all along been hostile. Their opposition to Him grew stronger and stronger till it culminated in the plot which led to His condemnation and death. In the one case He had to do with those who believed in Him, or wished to do so, in the other with those who wished not to believe. In dealing with the former He evidently considered the use of signs appropriate; in dealing with the latter He absolutely refused to have recourse to them. How are we to explain this difference? The explanation, we know, cannot be found in any mere personal feeling of pique or resentment. Had He thought that by performing some work of wonder He would have made the Pharisees more amenable to His influence there is little doubt that He would have given them the proof they asked for. The signs which to men of a different moral and spiritual disposition might have strengthened their faith would, in their case, have no such effect. So far from being impressed by them, they would probably have explained them in some way which would add to their condemnation. This, He remembered, had actually happened on at any rate one previous occasion. In this same Gospel we are told how the Scribes ascribed Christ's miracles to diabolic agency. 'By the prince of the devils,' they cried, 'casteth he out devils.' They admitted His supernatural powers; but they were hardened by them in their opposition to a point which exposed them to the risk of being placed outside the range of the Divine forgiveness.

¶ Magic is useless. It sets men looking to God to do something *for them*, instead of something *in them* and *through them*. It is the curse of true religion, its very contradiction. It cannot create life. It is a way of escape from life. It is a refusal to respond to God's call by casting all the responsibility back upon God. Again and again our Lord was asked to do signs and wonders and refused. It was part of the agony of His ministry to see His works of compassion and mercy misunderstood and misinterpreted, looked upon as magic rather than as mercy, as portents rather than as promises of God's love, and valued either for the material benefits they conferred or for their miraculous-

ness rather than for their spiritual meaning and significance.[1]

2. Now this implies that the ultimate proof of Christ's claim belongs to the inner and not to the outer order; that though external proofs may make belief already attained stronger and clearer, they are incapable by themselves of producing such belief; that its source springs rise in the consciousness of moral and spiritual need, and in the instinctive recognition of Christ as the satisfier of that need. This principle underlies all the teaching of the New Testament. We find it in a developed form in the master doctrine of salvation through faith. Faith, in the New Testament, is not primarily an intellectual act. It is primarily and essentially an act of instinctive recognition, an experience which, once attained, we can argue from, and to some extent explain in intellectual terms; but the attainment of which is independent of any conscious intellectual effort.

The exercise of faith as thus described is not limited to the religious province. It finds its highest expression there, but it lies in the background of every department of human activity. Ordinary human conduct is not reasonable in the sense of being the outcome of reasoned calculation. In the great majority of instances the normal man acts first and reasons afterwards. Take, for instance, the episode of love, than which none has more far-reaching results for the man who has experienced it. A man does not fall in love with a woman on reasoned grounds. He does not consciously analyse her different characteristics, and thus convince himself that any one endowed with such admirable qualities is a worthy object of his affections. The act is of quite a different kind. It is spontaneous, instinctive, and often immediate. It is the touching of life by life, the intertwining of sympathy with sympathy, the response of affection to affection. Later on, in explaining or justifying it to himself or to others, he may analyse and argue. But the experience is not attained by any such processes. Religious faith belongs to the same order of experience. It precedes and transcends all intellectual activity. It is as deep calling to deep, the consciousness of the intertwining of the soul life with God's life, of God's life with the soul life. The man who has attained this consciousness needs no external testimony to its reality. He is as sure of it as he is of his own existence.

¶ It seems to me that Bishop Wilkinson's strength lay in the fact that the core and centre of his faith was an exquisitely simple one—an intuition, for which 'certainty' is but a halting word, of the Fatherhood of God and of His hourly care for men, made manifest in the Life and Love of Jesus Christ. His whole purpose was to realize this presence at every moment of his life, and to lead others to realize it.[1]

3. But, though this is true, it is also true that a man cannot leave his faith outside the region of his intellectual activity. Now it is at this later stage that external testimony becomes valuable. Such testimony, however cogent, will not produce faith, but without it faith cannot achieve its full possibilities. Take, for instance, the testimony which the Pharisees demanded—that of physical miracles. Our Lord refused to provide this for them because they lacked faith, and miracles are no aid to its attainment. But they may aid its development. Faith, once attained, predisposes us to expect miracles. Once we become conscious of the working of God's life in us we instinctively expect that life to manifest its supremacy in the outer world of sense. Christianity is essentially a miraculous religion. For the root-fact of the Christian revelation—the fact that God was made flesh and dwelt among us—is essentially a miraculous fact, and carries with it the whole principle of miracles. Christ's miracles, however well attested, will not cause us to believe in Him as the Son of God. But that belief, once attained, is rendered stronger and more intelligent when we are convinced of their actual occurrence.

The same principle applies to external evidence of every kind—to evidence, that is, derived from observation and reflection upon events which have happened in the outer world. For instance, the historical evidences for the facts of Christ's Life and Death and Resurrection are quite incapable of producing faith in the soul which is as yet unconscious of Christ's indwelling presence. Experience shows that, dealt with outside the context of this conscious-

[1] G. A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Warrior, the Woman, and the Christ*, 171.

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Leaves of the Tree*, 127.

ness, it is not difficult to explain them away or to interpret them in the terms of mere naturalism. Take the most convincing form of external evidence—that provided by the moral and social results achieved by Christianity during the last nineteen hundred years. We Christians point with confidence to these as evidences of the Divine origin and character of the Christian movement. But to the non-Christian they bear no such significance. He can quite easily interpret them in terms which leave Christianity out of account altogether.

4. Men still demand to be convinced of the truth of Christianity by signs—by proofs based on external occurrences; by proofs which can be thrown into the form of intellectual arguments. But no such signs can be given to them. The principle which underlies Christ's refusal of the Pharisees' request is a fundamental one. The whole teaching of the New Testament implies it. Christ Himself expresses it again and again in explicit form. He does so, for instance, when He warns men that unless they become as little children they shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; or when, in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, He declares that those who are not convinced by Moses and the Prophets would not be persuaded by the testimony of one who had risen from the dead. It is to man's moral and spiritual faculties that the prophetic appeal is made. The primary revelation of Christ comes to us in the region of conscience. The man who fails to recognize and respond to Him there stands outside the circle of His fellowship. Intellect provides no entrance-gate to His presence-chamber. The world by wisdom knew not God, nor ever can know Him.

The Isolation of Jesus

Mark viii. 17.—'Perceive ye not yet, neither understand.'

1. Jesus Christ, by His presence among us, dwarfed all our capacities. That is the impression left by the gospel story. He is so utterly dominant and alone. Nothing moves on His levels. True, He is obviously one with us. Every power that He puts out belongs to our common nature. He stands out and walks and talks and acts, just according to the ordinary conditions of those about Him. Yet, merely through being what He is, He makes all other men appear small.

(1) Sometimes it is *the crowd* that witnesses to His dominance, as it follows Him about hardly knowing why. It is drawn after Him, aware of some strange authority that is different from that of all other men of whom they had had experience. 'He speaks as no man ever yet had spoken.' So, over the lake, far away on the foodless hills, they still listen and wonder and forget all else. They trust Him with all their troubles. Here are their sick, their maimed, their possessed. No one knows what to do with them. They pour out all the nameless secrets of their burdened lives and blotted homes with the instinctive confidence that the weak have in the strong.

And yet, He is never caught by the elation of mastery. He never commits Himself to the thrill of popular enthusiasm. He has read the secret of the crowd and has discounted all that it can do for Him. When it rises in heated enthusiasm round Him, He sends the poor, frail, useless mob home again. They only blunder over His kindness, and think that He is there to heal them—to be at the service of their needs. That is all that they can take in. He has counsels which they cannot share, and works for ends that they cannot see. The impression that the narrative leaves is of the gulf that divides Him from the multitudes that swarm around Him. They are childish, ignorant, foolish. He is so far above them that they cannot enter into His mind. And at last they totally fail Him.

(2) If the crowd is far below His level, so that His real purpose is entirely hidden from them, are the clever *leaders and chiefs of the people* any nearer to understanding Him? Those Jews in Judea, cultivated and equipped, find themselves nonplussed by a wisdom which they cannot fathom. 'Tell us plainly,' they cry, 'whether Thou art the Christ?' He is so puzzling, so intangible, so unintelligible. St John tells us how each sentence of His only served to stir a buzz of questions. 'Will He kill Himself? Will He go to the Dispersion?' 'Who is this Son of Man?' They get angry at their own incapacity to understand. They press forward in eager keenness to get at the truth—'tell us plainly'; and when it comes, they instantly recoil and take up stones to cast at Him. And in that last famous duel between Him and

Israel, when each champion comes up in turn to challenge and to fail—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Lawyers—how trifling their subtleties are. He walks through all their snares, and proves Himself Master so completely that they all confess defeat. 'Neither durst any man from this time forth ask him any more questions.'

(3) And yet, more than with the chiefs or with the mob do we feel this masterful supremacy of His over *His own closest friends*. Here are those who can come nearest to understanding Him. Here are those to whom He can confide His hopes. Yet could anything be more pitiful than their failure to respond? They are just like little children, led along in amazement, through a land unknown, to some unanticipated goal. They stumble over His sayings, and fail to grasp His simplest teaching. If He warns them against the leaven of the Pharisees, they think that He is complaining because they have not brought bread enough. As to His abrupt verdict on the difficulty that prevents a rich man from entering the Kingdom of Heaven, they are beyond measure astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' They cannot make out His teaching about what defiles a man—'Are ye also without understanding? Do not ye perceive that not that which goeth into a man can defile a man, but that which cometh out?' Even our Lord is surprised at such ignorance—'Are ye also without understanding?'

They have no conception of His rising variance with the governing principles of the Pharisees, and are shocked at the disapproval that He rouses in them. Finally, they attempt nothing beyond asking Him endless questions, just as children would of a great teacher. The questions spring from the heart, and are a witness to their guileless sincerity. Above all, their chief, Simon Peter, stands out as the arch-questioner. His fresh spontaneous heart reveals itself in this way to the great approval and joy of the Master. But all this only serves to bring out more vividly than ever how even the very foremost of the Lord's companions is but a child at His feet, utterly unable to be with Him where He stands, or to share His counsels, or to offer Him help. Even Simon blunders when he takes the initiative. He is anxious to explain that His Master loyally pays the Temple tribute; but finds at once that he has somehow got wrong about it. And when, on one momentous occasion, he, out of his own good heart of love, tried to protest against a dark and dangerous resolution that his Master had taken—'This be far from thee, Lord'—he received, instantaneously, that rebuke which absolutely forbade for ever any such liberty of criticism.

As the purpose of the Lord grew into shape, the disciples more and more abandoned all hope of understanding it. They settled down into silent amazement, and followed Him blindly into the night, and Jesus went before them. At the very last moment they are as incapable as ever of following His intentions. As the Master pours out the last message to those whom He is now to leave by themselves to manage and to rule—'Lord, we know not whither thou goest. How can we know the way?' cries a puzzled disciple. And Philip, slowest of all to understand, 'Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' Simon is protesting that he would die with Him, though he is on the edge of denying Him thrice. Nor did any of them ever suspect for a moment what was happening under their eyes in the heart of Judas, the betrayer, though the Master's soul is stricken to death with the tragedy that is working itself out as they eat bread. Could anything be more pathetic than this isolation of the Master? He has exposed His great longing to share His counsel with them, 'I have called you not servants, but friends; for the friends know what the Master doeth.' But these friends cannot take in what He tells them. And when He, yearning for their sympathy, asked for their companionship in the last agonized prayers, they fell asleep because their eyes were heavy.

Thou wast alone through Thy redemption vigil,
Thy friends had fled;
The angel at the garden from Thee parted,
And solitude instead,
More than the scourge, or Cross, O, tender-hearted,
Under the crown of thorns bowed down Thy head.[1]

Alone, He moves out to meet His fate. Alone, He conceives His purpose. As we read the tale we feel it instinctively incredible that Jesus Christ should ever consult anybody else about what is to be done. No one can detect the thoughts by which He arrived at His determination. He is never tentative, undecided, experimental.

[1] H. E. H. King.

Just once, in the mystery of the Temptation, we are admitted by some confidence of His own to the Twelve into the symbolic imagery of the mental struggle through which He saw the reality of His mission. But the struggle was wrought out utterly alone with the wild beasts in the wilderness. No one companions Him through it. The angels wander round, but no human eye, no human heart, is there with Him to cheer or suggest or guide. And He emerges from the hour of testing entirely equipped, self-possessed, in full mastery of His fate.

2. As of old, so now. We can read the words that say to us, 'Ye have the mind of Christ. He, the Comforter, is come who will shew you all things.' So it ought to be! So it was with those very companions of His after the Holy Ghost had come upon them. Then they did understand; then in a measure they shared His mind.

But we, what can we say when the words are read over to us? Do they not smite and sting? We look out over a dark, bewildered earth, and have no conception how the mind of Christ would deal with it. Problems, social, intellectual, moral, crowd in upon us menacing and urgent, and we know nothing of their solution. Evidently we have failed to live by the inward light which would have revealed to us the mind of Christ! Yet, though we have failed, we may still be as those disciples of His whom He was not ashamed to count His companions and friends on earth. Like them we are children; we cannot apprehend His purpose; we misjudge and misinterpret Him. Again and again He turns upon us with sad surprise, 'Do ye not perceive'? We are sharers in the disciples' ignorance.

If only in our stupidity we would do what they did! They were often amazed, sometimes afraid, but they followed. We, too, can follow, and the light will shine upon our path. There are signs where it is that Jesus wants us to go. We may not like it, but we know that this is the way down which He points, the way that is obviously set for us. We can cling to the power of His Person, to the supremacy of His will. He knows so much more than we can guess, and He stands over our perplexities with His calm assurance that God is Love.

¶ Dr Albert Schweitzer closes his famous book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, with these words: 'He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me!" and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery they shall learn in their own experience who He is.'

The Ministry of Memory

Mark viii. 18.—'Do ye not remember?'

'BEWARE of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod,' said our Lord as He turned to His disciples and warned them against the prejudiced spirit of the Pharisees. One would have thought the meaning of the warning was sufficiently plain. But the disciples were slow-witted men; they had a perfect genius for misunderstanding their Master's most obvious remark. They took that word 'leaven' in its literal meaning, and decided that their Lord's rebuke had something to do with bread. And when they remembered that they had brought only one loaf with them, they concluded that that was what Jesus was referring to—He was rebuking them, they argued, because they had forgotten to take bread.

This conclusion of the disciples caused Jesus a double wonder. First, a wonder that they did not understand—that after all their months of fellowship with Him, their thoughts still moved in the sphere of the material and the physical, and seemed incapable of rising into the sphere of the spiritual. And, secondly, a wonder that they could for a moment get into a panic about bread, since they had seen their Master feed the multitude. 'Do ye not yet remember?' said Jesus to them. Had they forgotten so soon the lesson of the feast just over? If they had only remembered, they would have been delivered at once from all their fears. If they had only remembered, they would have known that because they had Christ they had all things and abounded. And in this there is a permanent lesson for us all.

There is of course a stern and austere side to the ministry of memory—the faculty of judg-

ment. Memory is the recording angel who sets down all the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. And we shall be judged by what memory sets down, by what memory contains. And who is to say what it contains? We talk about 'forgetting.' Do we ever really forget anything? Some men's minds are like a desk, nicely pigeon-holed, with every paper in its proper place; and other men's minds are like a desk with the papers piled together higgledy-piggledy in most admired disorder. Each desk contains all the papers its owner requires, but in the one case he can lay his hand on the paper he wants in an instant; in the other he searches and searches, but though he knows it is there he cannot lay his hands on it. The difference is not so much in *memory* as in the power of *recollection*. Philosophers in these days talk about the subliminal consciousness. There is a whole range of mental activity of which we are not vividly and definitely conscious. And there is, in much the same way, a 'subliminal memory'; that is to say, memory keeps many things of which we are not aware, but which awake in some hour of crisis. You remember those poignant lines which Tennyson puts into the lips of Sir Percivale?—

Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'

But there is also a gracious and kindly side to the ministry of memory. If from the one point of view it is a minister of judgment, from another it is a minister of encouragement and inspiration; and this is what the words here suggest. We recognize this inspirational power of memory in our daily life. For instance, we observe certain anniversaries, and we visit certain shrines. When we pay our first visit to London, one of the places we inevitably visit is Westminster Abbey. We wander through that greatest of all Christian temples, in which all that is mortal of so many of England's noblest and best lies buried. We read the inscriptions on their tombstones, and, somehow or other, by mere contact through memory with the great and good of other days, our hearts are fired, our spirits purged, our lives touched to finer issues.

¶ I passed one morning from the Unknown Warrior's grave to gaze upon that simple slab beneath which rest the ashes borne through dark forests and across the ocean by dusky men whom this great servant of the Lord had won to be his friends. A little lad holding his mother's hand stood beside me. They were simple folk down on a cheap trip from a northern city to see the wonderful sights of London. Of all such sights, as that good woman told me, the one above all others her little son had most desired to see was that flat grey stone beside which I met them, the slab that bears the name of Livingstone. Thus does the sacred fire of love go kindling heart after heart, and the leaven of the kingdom renews the world.[1]

It is an unforgettable experience in America to be taken to Plymouth Rock, upon which those pilgrims of faith landed nearly three hundred years ago, not knowing whither they went, for their faith. There is profit, there is stimulus, there is inspiration in remembrance.

But the remembrance that is most charged with inspirational and victorious power is the remembrance of God. We get depressed and discouraged because we forget. We should be always rejoicing, if only we always remembered. As Isaac Watts puts it in his well-known hymn,

True, 'tis a strait and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint;
But they forget the mighty God
That feeds the strength of every saint.

Our religious life is not always at full tide. It ebbs and flows. Sometimes it is like a Highland stream in flood, and sometimes it is like a watercourse in summer, with the merest trickle of water in it.

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?

cries the poet Cowper. It was ebb-tide with that poor harassed and troubled soul. And it is ebb-tide sometimes with us. We get out of touch with God. If you have read the letters of Dr John Brown, the author of *Rab and his Friends*, you will remember how pathetic some of the later ones are. John Brown was one of the best and holiest men who ever doctored men's bodies or wrote books for the edification of their souls, and yet he spent many of his days

[1] A. Taylor.

in the shadow—doubtful of himself, doubtful almost of God. And we all of us probably know something of the feeling. But if God seems far off at the moment, we have had times when He was the nearest Reality in all the world to us. We doubt our Christian standing to-day, but we have had times when we *felt* God's love encircling us. Well, let us call those times back to remembrance! God is real, we have ourselves come face to face with Him. His love is real, we have felt it, and God does not change. Paul was continually 'remembering.' He was for ever harking back to the great event outside Damascus. Doubts as to His own calling—if they ever assailed him—vanished in the light of that remembrance.

¶ 'My dear children,' wrote Bunyan to his people, 'call to mind the former days, and years of ancient times. Have you never a Hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like, when God did first visit your souls? Remember also the word upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope. If you are down in despair; if you think God fights against you, or if heaven is hid from your eyes—remember!'

And once again, to be of good courage in our work and service in days of stagnation and reaction we need—to remember. Christ our Master must wonder at our depressions and despairs. For though difficulties do crowd in upon us, if we remembered we should be delivered from all fear. The practice of remembrance is the best thing the Christian Church could address herself to in these rather disappointing days. It would do her good to remember her own history. The progress of Christianity has not been uninterrupted and continuous. There have been advances and retreats, progress and reaction. Again and again the Church has seemed to be at the point of death; again and again her enemies have boasted themselves over her. They did so in the days of Diocletian and Galerius—when the Emperors proudly added to their other titles that of 'Destroyer of the Christian Superstition.' They did so in the Middle Ages, when vice and scepticism were rampant amongst the clergy, and the masses of the people were sunk in ignorance and credulity. Things looked bad for the Christian Church in those days. But within less than twenty years of the great persecution there was a Christian Emperor on the Roman throne; when things were at their worst in the Middle Ages, God had Luther ready to make religion more real and potent than it had been since Apostolic times. When men have tried to persuade themselves that the Christian faith was dead and buried, a mighty Resurrection has usually been close at hand.

Jesus did not simply mean to recall what happened in the feeding of the people, but to 'remember' that He was with them, and that in Him they had limitless resources at their command. And that is what He says to His Church to-day: 'Do ye not remember—Me?' The tasks confronting us are formidable. But we shall not be afraid of them if we remember God. That was how the people of Israel were to cheer and hearten themselves when the odds seemed to be against them in their warfare against the inhabitants of Canaan. 'If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt.' That was how Nehemiah strengthened the hearts of his little band of exiles in face of the enemies who beset them round about.

There are two Psalms in the Psalter which bear this curious title, 'A Psalm to bring to Remembrance.' That is the kind of psalm we need as churches and as individuals. We need to sing some psalm of remembrance of God's unfailing love and kindness to us as individuals; and of His marvellous works which He has done for His Church. All fears and doubts would vanish before remembrance. Let memory fulfil her gracious work.

Illumination

Mark viii. 22-25.—'And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him. And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly.' (R.V.)

THE story of this miracle is peculiar to St Mark's Gospel. There is no parallel to it in the other Synoptic Gospels. But the story, if

it is peculiar *to* St Mark's Gospel, is peculiar also *in* his Gospel. It is unlike all the other miracles which he relates in that it is, as it were, a miracle in two stages. It was not completed by a single word of our Lord; but twice He laid His hands upon the blind man's eyes, and it was only at the second laying on of His hands that the blind man's sight was fully restored and he saw all things clearly.

Yet the miracle is recorded in detail, as by an eye-witness. The blind man is brought to our Lord, He takes him by the hand, He leads him out of the town or village, He anoints his eyes with saliva, He lays His hands upon him, He asks him if he sees anything. The blind man 'looked up and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking.' The true focus of vision was not yet attained. Then the Lord lays His hands upon the blind man for the second time, and the blind man sees all things clearly.

¶ 'I find,' says Bishop Hall in his *Holy Observations*, 'but one example in all Scripture of any bodily cure which our Saviour wrought by degrees. Only the blind man, whose weak faith craved help by others not by himself, saw men first like trees, then in their true shape. All other miraculous cures were done at once and perfect at first.'

The special point, then, about the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, was the gradual character of the cure. And in this respect the miracle is a sign, a parable of the way Christ works in the matter of the illumination of the soul.

1. If one thing is certain it is this; Christ does not bestow full and complete vision all at once. Take it on the broadest platform, to begin with. *What is the Bible?* It is the story of the progressive revelation of God to the human race. But there is a vast difference between the first beginnings of revelation, as we have them in Genesis, let us say, and the full and perfect revelation given to us in the face of Jesus Christ. God spoke to our fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners. He revealed Himself, that verse seems to suggest, in fragments. The patriarchs saw God; they were vividly and intensely conscious of Him; but we cannot read the Old Testament without noticing that they did not see God clearly. There is much that is partial and therefore mistaken in their ideas about God.

Darkling our great forefathers went
The first steps of the way;
'Twas but the dawning, yet to grow
Into the perfect day.

¶ Far the most thrilling aspect of the Bible is the process which we see going on as we read the record of the extension of men's thought of God from the crudest anthropomorphism, through notions of a tribal god, then a national god, to a universal God and Father, accompanied all along by the transformation of the idea of devotion from naked and cruel sacrifice to the loyalty of all that is greatest and finest in human nature. It is a pilgrim's progress in thought and mind, in faith and devotion, wonderful beyond words, and the greater grew the revelation of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the more definite became the conception of Him as approachable, knowable, lovable, until we look at Him in the face of Jesus Christ.[1]

2. Take it on the narrower platform of the individual life, and there again we see that spiritual vision is progressive. We do not see everything clearly at the first touch of Christ. The whole teaching of the New Testament insists upon *progression in our apprehension of Christian truth.* When Christ first opens men's eyes to eternal things—everything does not at once become clear. The heights and depths of Christian truth are not revealed to them. The lengths and breadths of God's love are not comprehended by them. Like Paul himself, men press on if so be that they may apprehend that for which also they were apprehended in Christ Jesus.

And what is thus laid down in the New Testament as a matter of principle is illustrated there by what we read of the experience of the saints. Peter had been touched by Christ when he rose up, left all, and followed Him; but the Peter who at Christ's mention of the Cross took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid, this shall never be unto Thee,' was not a Peter who saw clearly. James and John had been touched by Christ into some dim vision of eternal things when they left their father Zebedee in the boats with the hired servants and gave themselves to the discipleship of Jesus; but the James and John who wanted to call down

[1] F. T. Woods, *Great Tasks*, 68.

fire from heaven upon the Samaritans who refused to receive Christ were not a James and John who saw clearly. The light did not break fully all at once. It grew! The Peter who talks about the being redeemed not by silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, saw infinitely more clearly than the Peter who rebuked Christ for thinking of a Cross. The John who wrote, 'Little children love one another,' was a John who saw infinitely more clearly than the John who wanted to destroy the Samaritans by fire. They had grown in grace and *in knowledge*. And what happened to these New Testament saints happens also to us.

¶ It was but a poor and imperfect vision of the cross of Christ I had when I started my Christian life. But it has become clearer and clearer to me as the years have rolled by. My study of God's Word, my experience of life, my better acquaintance with the sins and wants of my own heart, all these things have helped me to fuller understanding of the great mystery of Christ's death and passion. I do not say that 'I see clearly' even yet; but I see heights and depths, glories and mercies in the cross of Christ to-day that were hidden from me twenty years ago.[1]

3. But notice this, as following necessarily from what has been said—a man may have been really *touched of Christ, even though his vision may be vague and dim*. 'I see men,' said this sufferer, 'for I behold them as trees, walking.' It was a very imperfect and uncertain sight to which men appeared like trees. And yet this man had really experienced the touch of Christ. And so there are men and women whose notions of truth may be very crude and ignorant who yet have come into that direct and immediate contact with Christ which really constitutes the salvation of the soul. We are prone to doubt even the Christianity of men who hold imperfect or mistaken views about what we consider to be essential points. And yet if this incident teaches anything it teaches this—that a man's ideas may be sadly astray, and yet he may have had a genuine experience of Christ. After all, let us remember, it is not the correctness of our views but our personal experience of Christ that redeems. And so this story ought to teach us the lesson of charity towards others, and patience with ourselves. Do not be disappointed or disheartened if you find that there are mysteries still unsolved, questions still unanswered, depths still unfathomed. All this is in the Divine order. Everything does not become clear all at once. Christ lets us see things as we are able to bear them. He has many things to tell us, but we cannot bear them now. But what we do not know now we shall understand hereafter. Let patience have its perfect work. Spiritual vision is progressive. Things will become clearer to us and we shall become wiser as we patiently sit at Christ's feet. The Spirit will take of the things of Christ and will reveal them unto us.

4. While the story teaches the truth that spiritual illumination is gradual, it also brings us the assurance that Christ will not abandon His work *till the vision has become perfect*. When He begins, Christ also makes an end. He was not content to leave this man in that condition of uncertain and imperfect sight when men appeared to him as trees walking. He touched his eyes again and he was restored and saw all things clearly. And this is just a parable of what Christ will do for the soul. Before He has finished His work upon us, we too shall see clearly! That is a beautiful verse in the Book of Proverbs, 'The path of the just is as the light of dawn which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Like 'the light of dawn!' We have seen it first touch the hills, while the valleys lay shrouded in darkness and night, and then gradually creep down the hillside, sweeping the night before it, until at length it has invaded every nook and cranny and filled everything with sunshine and brightness. Our Lord will not leave us for ever in the twilight with only a groping and uncertain knowledge. He will bring us into the 'perfect day.'

Through love to light, O wonderful the way
That leads from darkness to the perfect day!
From darkness and from sorrow of the night,
To morning that comes singing o'er the sea.
Through love to light; through light, O God, to Thee
Who art the Love of love, the eternal Light of light.

[1] J. D. Jones.

Uncertainty

Mark viii. 24.—'And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.'

THERE is the element of real human interest in this miracle. We are listening to an honest and cautious man trying to describe what he finds it hard to describe with any intelligible precision. 'He asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking.' He is trying his best to explain his present relation to things which he is beginning to see, and will soon, if he has faith and a moment's patience, see quite clearly.

Our Lord's question is one that is heard again and again in the ward of an ophthalmic hospital, where men are asked with regard to any improvement, however small, in their power of vision. Sometimes the only answer may be a pathetic negation: nothing at all! Sometimes just a little consciousness of the presence of light; sometimes the recognition of, they know not what it is, moving in their neighbourhood. How gladly they welcome even the slightest sign that the lost faculty is coming back to them, that they see things a little more clearly than they did a week ago, or when their course of treatment began! There will of course be despondent patients who are inclined to treat as nothing the first glimmerings of sunlight, contrasting them rather bitterly with what they may remember of perfect eyesight. And others, it may be, will be too readily content with a recovery that is incomplete.

It is worth while to remind ourselves—for it has a real illustrative value—how difficult doctors find it to estimate the real worth of what patients tell them about themselves. It is so hard for them not to confuse fact with fancy. Just as sometimes in the ruins of antiquity you are startled by the discovery of a modern phrase or a modern feature, so here there is something strangely familiar to modern ears in the man's answer to our Lord's inquiry. He is so clearly doing his best to describe what is difficult to define. 'I see men as trees, walking.' He sees something; but he is equally clear that he sees not yet all there is to see! 'Men as trees, walking' seems to stand extraordinarily well as a constant type of partially recovered sight!

1. Does it not seem that all this, so simple, so natural, so human, has a bearing on ever so much that is happening on the surface of life in the present day? Bishop Gore says that 'the world in which we live to-day can only be described as chaotic in the matter of religious beliefs.' It is characteristic of our times that the power of tradition seems to be broken; men wish to think things out. They are apt to turn round with something like bitterness on conventions which have little reality at the back of them, on formulas that seem to have lost all meaning, on religious practice that is merely perfunctory and mechanical. You hear, indeed, the most various and contradictory estimates of what is going on. One man will tell you of a world immensely eager to know about religion; another will speak with equal certainty of widespread indifference, of despair with regard to what he sums up as the 'whole thing.'

Be that as it may, it is almost impossible to rid oneself of the impression of really vast numbers of people not only eager and earnest in their desire to come at the truth, but patient and self-sacrificing in their search for it. It is not conceit or scepticism or unwillingness to be convinced that makes them critical and hesitant. It is very often a high form of spiritual sincerity; it is a protest in many cases against the real profaneness of unreality. There is an almost nervous dread of easy acceptance of what is offered for our belief. 'To see for myself and not another'; what Job longed for seems so curiously like that for which so many long to-day. I want to have for myself something, though ever so little, of immediate consciousness of things Divine.

2. It is immensely difficult to give coherent description to what is in itself so incoherent; to put into words that which has as yet found no words for its heart's desire. Again and again it is with some people with regard to the spiritual world as it is with the blind in the matter of the natural world: they do not want it described to them. Yes, they seem to say, it may be all that and more, but I want to see it for myself; just a specimen of the gold of that land which is so good, a sample of its produce: for I am not of those who are tempted to think scorn of that pleasant land!

'He put his hands upon him, he asked him if

he saw ought.' It was a real sight of a real world, a different thing from those strange prismatic colours which you get on rubbing your eyes or pressing your eyelids, a different thing from the idea of reality which imagination might frame on the strength of information.

Try to think of a man of to-day beginning, as some do, to see things for himself. The hand of the Saviour has been laid upon him, and in His light he begins to see light. Things are beginning to come clear. But there is no sharpness of outline; things run into one another, and truths seem to collide. The very sense, for example, of God's love is challenged and harassed by all sorts of facts that seem to contradict it. Nothing seems to behave as it ought. 'I see men as trees, walking'! There is for most men a very special sense of confusion when seeing for themselves they begin to see things as they really are!

3. It may be well to offer some suggestions as to the difficulties and the responsibilities of those who are thus coming to 'see for themselves.'

(1) To say that you have seen a thing when you have not seen it lies at the heart of religious insincerity, of shallow religious talk, of solemn conventionality. We do it when we use language which we do not understand, and pretend to experiences which are not ours. It is dreadfully tempting sometimes. No one can consider the religious output of the day without noticing the demands we are making on our mystics. We read them eagerly; we long to see what they have seen, and to feel what they have been permitted to feel. We have won, by prayer, our own little bit of religious experience—times at which God has been wonderfully near us, and we have heard Him speak. But it is not enough for us; we want more. And then it is that the temptation comes—the temptation which somehow the better part of us resists—to say we have seen a thing when we have not seen it.

Against this temper there is a revolt in the present day. It is often real intellectual and religious honesty that lies behind the reticence, the slowness to confess, and the avoidance of open profession. We will not pretend that we believe what, so far we do not believe, or say that we have seen a thing when we have not seen it.

¶ Dr Paget tells of a well-remembered scene in the life of a little child. 'It was on the coast of Wales, and towards sunset the Isle of Man was seen with unusual clearness. The child had been sleeping, but an officious relative thought it would be good to wake him and show him the distant island. He was brought down dreadfully sleepy, and told where to look for it. You know the sort of thing that happens! "Do you see it? No, you are not looking in the right direction. Do you see it? No, not there! Do you see it; a sort of little hill rising out of the sea? No, not that!" And after repeated "No's," at last, very weary and very bored, the child said "Yes," and was taken back to his bed. But he took a long time getting to sleep; he was clearly unhappy and uneasy about something, and at last he said to his nurse, "Would a gentleman say he had seen a thing when he had not seen it?" Such was an honest child's protest against pretending to see what really he had not seen.'

(2) But is there not another side to this? Must not the honesty that refuses to say that it has seen what it has not seen be at least as ready to own, when it has seen a thing, that it has really seen it? Even if you find it hard to say what you have seen; even if it is only men as trees walking, blurred outlines, confused forms; whether it be matter of faith or matter of conduct, you cannot say you have seen nothing. Hold on firmly to that which you have got; the light is faint and dim, but you must trust it and begin to walk in that light. There is need of patience, there is need of prayer. The hands which were laid upon you and gave you partial sight will be laid on you, as it were, again, and you will look up; you will 'steady your eyes,' and you will see all things clearly.

There is a temper, a spirit, which it is well for us to avoid! We are sometimes tempted to be too easily content with a blindness only partly cured, with a seeing only half restored to us. There is after all no merit in vagueness; that blurred outline and that misty form are not really characteristic of the great realities you are coming to apprehend, the great spiritual truths you are on your way to discovering. The mist is on the lens, not on the star; in the eye, not on the landscape. There are those who, half seeing, rest too contentedly in the twilight, in love with the vagueness, tempted to deny,

sometimes even with scorn, the possibilities of clearer vision, of stronger and more coherent faith. But 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day!'

The Category of Genius

Mark viii. 27.—'Whom do men say that I am?'

THERE have been many answers to this question, but one that we have heard a good deal about lately is that our Lord may be described in terms of religious genius. As one man has a genius for poetry and another for science, so Jesus had a genius for religion. Does this answer satisfy and does it fit the facts?

1. *Genius is separable from its own achievements.*—The history of genius is nothing else than the long struggle to liberate its powers. It is the effort to work into expression the forces that are tumultuous within. It is the passion to body out the soul, in block of marble or in word of beauty, which shall live on and be a joy to men when the creator is sleeping in his grave. You can get all the enrichment of a play like *Hamlet* though you know nothing about William Shakespeare. You can learn the wonders of modern astronomy, and the interactions of the solar system, though you live in an ignorance as deep as midnight of the life-story of Copernicus. That is the characteristic of all genius. It displays its powers in an external medium.

Now, the moment we turn to the historic Jesus we are faced by something absolutely different. There is not the faintest suggestion in the records that Christ was struggling to liberate His powers. The one thing we can never do with Christ is to separate His achievement from Himself. His revelation was His personality, and it is through that that He has blessed the world. You can separate the *Iliad* from Homer, and you can separate *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* from Shakespeare, but you can never separate the Redeemer's triumphs from the personality of the Redeemer. The one impression you do *not* get in Christ is that of forces struggling to express themselves. Christ was not struggling to express Himself; Christ was the expression of the Father.

2. *Genius is a matter of degrees.*—In one man it is a flame of splendour, and in another it is a tiny spark. On some men genius lays her hand so lightly that the touch of her fingers is almost imperceptible. Others she grasps into her straining arms, and breathes her very soul upon their lips. And so at the one extreme you have these gentle souls who have lilted beside innumerable waters, and at the other you have a Dante or a Milton. They are more than talented, these differing men; they are brothers in the gift of genius. The humblest maker of a genuine lyric is a true citizen of that immortal kingdom where Chaucer and Spenser and Dryden are the peers, and one who was born by the Avon is the king. Genius, then, has its less and has its more.

Now when we study Jesus Christ in Scripture, one impression becomes overwhelming. It grows upon us that He stands alone, in incommunicable, solitary grandeur. The one thing we can never do with Christ is to regard Him as belonging to a class. The one thing that is utterly incredible is that of Him there should be less or more. You may talk of the goodly fellowship of the martyrs, and of the glorious company of the apostles, but over against us all—confronting us—there stands, alone, the Person of our Lord. No man cometh to the Father but by Me—no man knoweth the Father but the Son. In the unconditional obedience He demands—in His unparalleled and stupendous claims—in His immediate knowledge of the Father—in the absence of the least consciousness of sin in Him we have a historic fact which is not only different in degree, but is absolutely different in kind, from anything that the world has ever seen.

¶ Professor Hogg of Madras puts his own experience in this way:[1] 'When, as detached bystanders, we look upon His features, as it were, in profile, considering them singly and in repose, we seem to find none that is not human, none at least that does not belong to the nature which God designed for man. But let us move in front and catch His glance, so that the personality which lived by means of these human endowments may pierce our consciousness with a look in which its eager passion and its tender pity, its searching purity and its gracious comprehendingness, its assurance of a world-redeeming vocation and its unaffected neighbourliness, its kingly demands and its selfless devotion, make simultaneous impact

[1] *Redemption from this World*, 65.

on our souls, and we shall then lose all intent to measure or to classify; we shall know ourselves in the presence of the utterly unique One.'

3. *Genius is notoriously unhappy.*—It is a dowry that is wet with tears. Even in the common relationships of life we know how often genius is unhappy. There is such quivering sensibility in genius, that only the grace of God can give serenity. Yet, after all, that is not the deepest of it; the sorrow of genius is a deeper thing. It is the sorrow of the heart that has seen heaven, and yet cannot climb the ladder to the throne. It is the craving of the soul for the ideal; the haunting of visions that are unrealized; the torture, after years of striving, of an imperfect mastery of one's material. When he has poured himself into his best, the genius feels that there is still a better. The singular thing about Jesus Christ is this, that no such sense of failure ever touched Him, though He had a task to do so mighty that beside it that of the artist is but play. You never find Jesus craving for the ideal; you find Him always living in the ideal. You never find Him, when His day is over, crying 'Alas, what a failure I have been'; you find Him crying gloriously 'It is finished.' Most emphatically that is not genius.

¶ Keats adorned the national literature with lines of imperishable beauty, but when he comes to compose his own epitaph he writes these words: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'

4. *Genius makes us conscious of our distance.*—That seems one of its essential elements. When we meet with a man of ordinary talent, we are not conscious of any great remoteness. But whenever we are face to face with genius, even if it be only a spark of genius, then we feel a separation, a strange disabling sense as of a distance, leading us to feel that all is useless, and bringing us to the margins of despair. In the presence of Christ men never have been conscious of that feeling. The more they have felt His infinite transcendence, the more they have felt that in Him they had a brother. He is nearer to us a thousand times than Shakespeare. In our intensest moments, when the deeps are calling, He is nearer to us than our hands and feet. 'Come unto me and I will give you rest,' and men in their multitudes have come to Him. The poor have come, and the prodigals have come, and the waifs and strays and wreckage of humanity, and none have been overwhelmed with Jesus' distance.

5. *Genius evokes wonder not worship.*—And all through the ages worship and not wonder has been faith's final attitude to Christ. From first to last, in the New Testament, Christ is the object of adoring worship. Confronted by no august tradition, the apostles found themselves bowing at His feet. And, from that day on to the present, every believer in his holiest hours has carried all that he has found in Jesus into the heart of the eternal God. Seeking God's will, he has followed Christ's will; listening for God's voice, he has heard Jesus' voice. The love revealed on the Cross is the love that dwells in the heart of God. Until, not as a matter of reasoning, but by sheer power of spiritual impression, he has bowed down and worshipped at Christ's feet.

¶ It is very interesting, very searching, to realize that some of those outside the churches have this feeling about Jesus. Mr H. G. Wells sums up his picture of Him by the confession that 'He is too great for our small hearts,' and Mr Middleton-Murry in his *Life of Jesus* comes to this conclusion: 'Keep we our heads as high as we can, they shall be bowed at the last.'

Inadequate Views of Christ

Mark viii. 27-29.—'And by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?'

'WHOM do men say that I am?' asked Christ. And as He gathered the various opinions that His friends had heard, this, at least, became abundantly clear—that people, as a whole, were thinking about Him, that they had been immensely impressed by what He said, and what He did, and what He was, so that, however sharply they might differ about Him, they were all agreed that this Man in their midst took rank by right among the very greatest figures in their history. They had to think Him out, to deal with this new and impressive fact that had entered their lives, to fit Him into their scheme of things.

And yet some of the conclusions to which

they came concerning Him seem very singular and maladroit. Not a few, for instance, reported that He reminded them of John the Baptist. Some declared that He was the long-expected Elijah returned to earth. Others that He was one of the line of the Prophets. These were some of the estimates formed of Him.

¶ 'The contemporaries of superior men,' says Goethe, 'are very apt to go wrong about them. An original personality confuses them; the swift current of passing events distorts their vision and prevents them understanding or even recognizing such a man.'

1. To us John and Jesus seem as far apart as are the healthy but biting austerity of winter and summer with its blaze of gold and glory. None the less, there must have been something akin in them before these people could have so linked them together in their minds. Probably what they found common to both was that brave note of utter fearlessness and absolute sincerity. John was a great creature of God, a very valiant spirit, over whose grave might have been written what they inscribed above John Knox's, 'Here lies one who never feared the face of man.' Others might cringe before Herod; but John dauntlessly hurled his ugly sins full in that flabby, sneering face. It might cost him his life—in point of fact it did—but what cared he?

And Christ had the same fearless eyes, and the same love of truth, cost what it might. Such was His sheer daring indeed, that even yet, after two thousand years, we are afraid to follow Him; we are too timid really to use and fully to work out that law of life which He laid down, and actually lived. We hedge and compromise and try to forget it. We tone down Christ's requirements till they match the prevalent way of things or nearly so. Even yet we dare not follow Christ, and fail Him from sheer cowardice! What is all this frightened bleating about intrepid souls who venture to assert that they find a development in Scripture, a gradual progress in it from a less to a more, so that some parts of it are of slighter value than are others, and some bits have become wholly obsolete and out of date? How shocked such people would have been by Christ, who dared to correct Moses, to take God's Word into His hands and to say bluntly as He turned the pages, and found passage after passage, this and this, in Scripture though it be, is no longer valid or sufficient! Here and now I abrogate it, rule it out, and give you something better in its place, and with that scored it through, and wrote His own new law above it! We admire that in Christ, and in the great men in the days behind us. But if any one speaks so in our time, many grow anxious and disquieted. And yet, as Rainy cried in a great crisis, 'The independence of the Church of Christ is not something conceived by our fathers as existing then, but never to exist any more.' In every generation we must dare to use the liberty of the sons of God, not merely keep it proudly in a museum or a shrine, like Goliath's sword, but gird it on, and so out against God's enemies now!

And yet while there was that obvious resemblance between the two mighty preachers of that day, it was Christ Himself who drew a deep and clean-cut chasm of distinction between Himself and His contemporary. Between John and Myself there is this difference, He said, that he tends to think of religion as a prohibition and a negation, while to Me it is the filling life with a colour, a richness, a glory that otherwise cannot be even dreamed.

John withdrew to the desert, and that was a symbol that meant much. He called to men to give up this, to renounce that, to lead a bare and austere life, alone with God, who of Himself, so he assured them, would far more than suffice them, as indeed He does. But to Jesus the beauties of the wonderful earth, the happiness of our natural relationships, the light on children's faces and the laughter of their voices are, not snares, but helps; not avenues that lead to evil, but steps that climb up to the heavenly places and the very feet of very God. To Christ, John's attitude was not really religious. It meant John was afraid of life, and in a panic way surrendered whole provinces of it to evil. And Christ Himself would not. He held that all life, apart from actual sin, can be, and ought to be, and must be, cleansed for God, and lived for God; that real religion is as wide and ample as the whole breadth of human experience, and ought to overarch and permeate it all.

¶ Dr Johnson, on a famous occasion, pronounced that 'this merriment of parsons is mighty offensive,' which is the judgment of Josephus repeated in another age; and Dr Davidson's imagination of the child Jesus as 'grave, retired and sad' is in the same key. In

a half-comic way, that has given the law for men's behaviour in church, where they sit with such preternatural solemnity of countenance, as if religion were, of all interests, the most depressing. But think of Francis, that troubadour of Christ, with his wealth of sunny inspirations, with song and laughter and flowers woven in with that perpetual ministry to the Lord and His poor; was that unevangelical? Or think of Pascal, when his eyes were opened, elated to such an extent that his sister had to ask what his spiritual director would think of such a *gleeful* penitent? Or, above all, think of Jesus and the disciples, these children of the bride-chamber, who lived one day at a time, and found each as it came the very flower and glory of days. I suspect that true souls are always hilarious, and that one step towards the restoration of the evangel in the Church would be the breaking of this tradition and the letting in of the sun. Dr Davidson says of Muhammad that he had that indispensable requisite of a great man, he could laugh with all his might. And in a follower of Jesus something like that is still desirable.[1]

Just what to do and what not to do is a continual and teasing problem. Even Paul hesitates, and cannot be very explicit. He builds up an unanswerable case; and with that, like children playing at sand-castles, no sooner is it finished than he knocks it over and fashions another, just as convincing on the other side. Every man, he claims, is entitled to deal with God at first hand for himself, to stand up squarely on his own feet and follow his own conscience, is not to be bullied or brow beaten by another's stupid scruples. So that is that, and we know what to do. And yet already he is taking back with one hand what he gave us with the other. Is one to risk the soul of a poor brother, stupid though he may be, for whom Christ died? Surely one will unhesitatingly forgo much, almost anything indeed, to avoid any chance of that. So we have turned about, it seems, and our road lies the other way after all. But in the end he comes to this of it about all these debatable points. Apart from how others are affected (and that we are bound always to consider), if we cannot indulge in this or that without damage to our soul, without a bad taste being left in the mouth, without a miserable sense that God is somehow farther away, then cut if off at once and give God thanks. Only remember that there are others who can do what is impossible for us, and look God in the eyes and thank Him for it, for this very thing that would stumble us; and it is they, not we, who are the more religious souls. If, said Christ, thy hand offend thee cut it off and cast it from thee! Better to enter into life maimed, if need be, than for the soul to die. And yet is the most that grace can do for us only to save us indeed, but as maimed and truncated things? Better! But best of all, surely, is it if our whole life can be wholly saved, and we come to God hale and strong, and with both hands to serve Him.

Look again at that picture that hangs in the oratory of your soul. Are you quite sure that it is Jesus Christ, entirely certain it is an authentic Master? Because, in every age, there have been those who account themselves strict Christians, and yet the face that rises up before them when they pray, the character in which they see God's nature clearest, the life that is the standard that they strive to imitate is, little though they know it, not Jesus Christ's at all, but John the Baptist's.

2. But there were others who went further and talked boldly of Elijah. That was a marvellous tribute, for it is not easy to exaggerate the place that that great figure held in that generation's mind. Every one knew that he was to appear again before the world was cleansed from evil, and God's Kingdom rose in power. For centuries they had been watching for him, with hearts often sick of waiting. But at times when Jesus was preaching there went a rustle of excitement through the crowds, and a hope lit suddenly in many a face; and men whispered confidently to their neighbours, 'This is he, at long last really he!' At which we look at them queerly. For Jesus and Elijah seem exceedingly unlike.

Not in all ways and in all things. Perhaps these people had been in the Temple that day when Christ's eyes blazed into dreadful anger, and He hurled the tables to the ground, while the wretched traffickers clutched, futilely enough, at their precious coins tinkling to the pavement, spilling and scattering into the most inaccessible corners. There is that element in Christ, and we forget it at our peril.

[1] W. M. Macgregor.

Yet it was Christ who pointed us to the vast gap yawning between Elijah and Himself. 'Let us burn up their wretched village about their unmannerly ears, the surly dogs,' snarled James and John, angry at the gross discourtesy to Christ, 'Elijah would have done it.' 'You know not,' Christ broke in, 'what manner of spirit ye are of: Elijah might, but I!' And indeed the thing is inconceivable in Him. The truth is that, with all his heroism, the great prophet, in Christ's presence, looks crude and uncouth, a stormy figure bursting in out of a wilder world. He, all alone, could face force unafraid, with never a flicker of the eyelids; yet he himself believed in force, and used it mercilessly when it lay on his own side. Wrath, suddenness, immediacy, terror, something open and obvious and cataclysmic and tremendous—that is the mark of God, he thought. And it was only slowly he was brought to see that a still small voice can carry farther than much din and noise and tumult; and that spiritual forces, ineffective though they seem, are in reality far more potent than the material things on which our hearts are so apt to depend; that the swift revolutions that we engineer are wont to collapse in a recoil of hideous reaction, and that it is God's way of it, with truth stealing into the world unnoticed, secretly, slipping from heart to heart as the infection of a brave man's courage spreads to others round him, that really makes for progress.

It is immensely difficult heartily to credit that as Jesus did. 'I can only believe in a God who does something,' Froude said to Carlyle once; and the latter, old and tired and daunted for the moment, answered sadly, 'And He does nothing!' Certainly He does nothing in our noisy, vulgar, self-advertising, hustling way. And because we have accustomed ourselves to that kind of thing, accepted it as the sign-manual of real effectiveness, we miss it, and are staggered and lose heart. The whole mood of the age is to turn from the Church, to push it irritably aside. If it would take political action, or do something, something definite and real, something that one can see and touch and handle, instead of all this talk about men's souls and unseen powers!

In our own spiritual life do we not find it strangely difficult to take God simply at His word, and to rely on that implicitly? Do we not also call for proofs and evidence before we will believe? Do we not lose heart almost on the instant, if we cannot find them? Do we not constantly forget that vivid metaphor of Bunyan, that while it is sin's blustering way to hurl water upon the fire, that while temptations are dishearteningly obvious, God's grace is like oil dropped in secretly and from behind. Ours is too apt to be that very rudimentary faith that can believe only when and just so far as it can see, and which, when it does not, grows at once sullen towards God, and sour in its uncharitable thoughts of Him.

The fact is that to this day most of us in the Church are Elijahites, not Christians. We still believe mainly in fuss and noise and crowding and organization and machinery. We don't believe in silence; we have forgotten the healing of stillness, and the power of worship, and we fill God's House with such a din and clamour that His voice cannot reach us even in His holy place.

3. But others took a wiser line. Who is it, they said? He is far and away the greatest teacher who ever came into my ken. No one I ever heard, no one I ever read, so thrills my soul and stirs my mind and wins my heart. I take down my Isaiah or Hosea, or even Jeremiah, greatest of God's prophets, and it is old and familiar and no longer bites with its first freshness into my jaded mind. But this man comes to me like a new revelation, like a word straight from God. When He is preaching, God seems very near, grows wonderfully lovable; and the horizons of life leap out upon every side, and it lies there a far richer and ampler thing than I had known, and sin—my sins are so disgusting that they nauseate me. This is to me a messenger of the Divine. He also is a prophet, ay, and the best of them to me.

These were bold words then, though we all echo them now, and know that Christ is the greatest of all teachers, that we have learned far more from these slim pamphlets that we call the Gospels than from all human literature beside. Yet Christ is frankly disappointed if that is all that we can say. His eyes cloud, and His face looks almost vexed, and He turns to those who know Him better, and, Whom do you say that I am? He asks. What does it profit us to know how lovable God is unless our hearts are really loving Him, to see how great a thing our life may be, if actually we continue in the old

mean ways; to realize how ugly our sins are, if we remain in them as before? To know is only the beginning. What is coming of it in our character and soul? Is it lifting us above ourselves and making other, bigger, better men and women of us? If we ask any one in the New Testament what Jesus did for him, he will answer at once—He saved me! And when we, too, are asked, Whom do you say Christ is? it is only dimly and inadequately and afar off that we know Him unless we also can reply, awed, humble, grateful, wondering, yet very sure, He is my Saviour!

A sinner I; but who art Thou
With many crowns upon Thy brow?
I see the thorn among them now,
I know Thee for my Saviour.

What seek I longer? let me be
A sinner all my days to Thee;
Yet more and more—and Thou to me
Yet more and more my Saviour.[1]

Before and After Caesarea Philippi

Mark viii. 31.—'And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.'

Jesus had now come to the end of His public ministry in Galilee. He had poured out His heart to these countrymen of His, by word and act labouring to show them what He meant, and He had found a welcome, as we know. Crowds had gathered, work was left undone, and hunger itself was forgotten, as the people chased after the new Teacher in His sudden movements and escapes about the Lake. He was a master of the people's talk, living, concrete, pictorial, and they rejoiced in His words and works. To a large extent He was a popular hero acclaimed wherever He went.

That chapter of the wonderful Galilean ministry, however, was as good as closed, and though Jesus had not talked of it He knew what the next chapter would be. As yet there had been no mention of suffering and death. But now He has done with the crowd; He had no faith now in the effect of these multitudinous appeals, for He saw that His work must grow by the mastering of individuals. It was thus the question came, a life or death question; and, when the right answer leaped out to meet Him, His mind travelled forward in a flash to matters which had lain beyond the range of all His talk before. 'Give me a place to stand on,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world'; and Jesus said in effect, 'Give Me one man who believes, and, with that secure, My Church shall rise and stand eternal.' And from that day, the day when Peter made his great confession, He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things.

1. Whom do they take Me for? asked Jesus, and the disciples found no difficulty in answering. For a long while before this happened the sense of who He was must have been stirring in their minds; as they watched Him and listened to Him they came to the point where it was impossible to think of Him merely as a peasant teacher wonderfully endowed. For a time they had regarded Him in that light, if indeed they asked any questions at all. But it could not be that these men should hear Jesus speak and watch Him at work without the wonder arising as to what it all meant, and how it was related to everything they had learnt of the past and hoped from the future. We must imagine, then, that, preceding this day of illumination, the minds of the disciples were working at the problem, coming slowly to the point when conviction begins to dawn. They were passing, as we all have to pass, through doubts and hesitations to the brink of a great affirmation. Whenever they were alone for a moment, in twos or threes, conversation would turn naturally to this subject. In all this Jesus Himself had no part. He left their minds free to work; that was His great method as a teacher. He never forced or hurried a conclusion until the moment came when the mind was ready for it; but He knew what was happening.

Now, it is a relief to be asked what others think when we ourselves are wrestling with the same problem, and so, immediately the question was asked, the replies began, one saying 'Moses,' another, 'Elijah,' and yet another, 'one of the prophets.' When their voices had died down, and expectancy was in the air that at last He would tell them plainly, the question that they had asked themselves again and again came back to them from the lips of Jesus, 'Whom say ye that I am?' It was in that strained

[1] Dora Greenwell.

and anxious hour that Peter found his voice first. With trembling heart he put into words the feelings of all. 'Thou art the Christ.' The secret was out at last. No human lips had dared as yet to confess Jesus as the Christ. The Baptist, in his prison, when his own work of thunder and alarm had fallen to nothing, had begun to speculate, and he dared to send his friends to ask Jesus if it *could* be that He was Himself the Christ. That is a masterpiece of unassisted faith; there is nothing like it in the whole New Testament. But even to John it was only a huge perhaps.[1]

Jesus left His disciples to discover that secret for themselves. Everything they came to believe about Him was the result of their own thought working on their experience. Like the disciples we confront the fact of Christ for ourselves, and at the beginning all the age-long Christian tradition is no more to us than the opinions of others were to these first disciples. It is not enough to stop at that point, for we cannot live by what the Church believes or what the Creeds affirm. Sooner or later the question has to be faced, 'What do you say?' And it is from that moment that belief begins. The Creed does not come at the beginning; we grow up to it and into it. Life is incomplete without a Cæsarea Philippi.

But, great as the confession was, it needed supplementing, and, the very day it was made, 'he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be killed.' It is surely impressive that, just when Peter had dared to speak of his Master's glory as the Christ, he was on the eve of seeing a Christ greater yet; for he had to learn that Jesus, seen apart from the Cross, is a Jesus robbed of half His radiance and command.

2. We see, then, that the confession at Cæsarea marked a dividing line in Christ's ministry. And an interesting thing to notice about this division is that it still exists in men's thoughts about Christ and their conception of His work. In certain evangelical circles a little while ago—and the same is true to some extent to-day—the Cross of Christ covered the whole field; there was no room for the other picture, the Christ of the lake and the mountain-side, the lover of Nature and of men.

From that emphasis there came the reaction, and men turned from the last agonies to the Christ of the earlier years. They wrote books about the Galilean ministry; they exchanged the picture of the Man of Sorrows for the picture of the Man of Joy. We are still in that phase of thought; it is the characteristic modern emphasis, and there are many to-day to whom Christ seems a remote figure when He begins to talk about His sufferings. We move as strangers among the gathering mysteries which led Him to His Cross; we do not grasp the reason for it or what was accomplished by it. Partly we have been repelled by all the clear-cut doctrines as to what the Cross means. Yet, interpret it how we may, the great fact of the Cross has been the centre of power in Christianity through the centuries. We need to start again on the task of re-interpretation, remembering that no doctrine can ever fully express the meaning of the Cross. If the Galilean ministry had been the whole story where would Christianity be, face to face with the world's evil? That is the question with which we must begin to find our way back to the true place of the Cross of Christ. After all, the world which has to be saved is not unlike the world which Christ faced at the end. It is not a world which would listen to the Sermon on the Mount, let alone be changed by it. It is a world where there is blindness and cruelty and deceit and passion, such as you get in the Sanhedrin and the Judgment Hall. It is of no use pretending that the world has only to see the light in order to follow it. Again and again it has seen the light, and its attitude from first to last is a frenzied attempt to quench it.

There are only two possible ways for God to take, faced with a world like that. It must either be the power which blots out such men, or the love which bears all that they can do, suffers to the end at their hands, that by suffering it may win them back. The first phase of Christ's ministry, hauntingly beautiful as it is, would never have availed to capture the souls of men. There must be some second phase, some dealing with the world's wrong. When Christ began to tell His disciples that He must suffer that second way was in His mind—to go to Jerusalem, the centre of all that plotting, cruelty and deceit, the greed of riches, and the lust of power. He must face it all and must win it by letting it do with Him as it liked. And it did! But we know how

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*, 162.

the Cross gradually changed from the symbol of defeat into the sign of a new kind of power, and that ever since that power has been at work. It is really near to life, the supreme expression of the love which waits and suffers so that it may win in the end. It is still, and always will be, the secret of the world's salvation from wrong to right. It is only Calvary which can conquer greed and lust and the false ways of power.

¶ A well-known British journalist watched the Passion Play at Oberammergau and came away saying to himself: 'This is the story that has transformed the world,' and he seemed to hear an echo, 'Yes, and will transform it.'

¶ In the course of one of his sermons Dr Norwood, of the City Temple, told how he had recently examined a hymn-book 'published by a Society which claims to be humanitarian but not especially Christian,' and found that one verse of Matheson's great hymn, 'O Love that wilt not let me go,' was omitted. That verse was the one which begins, 'O Cross that liftest up my head.' 'Yes,' said Dr Norwood, 'they are always leaving it out. They want their Utopias, but they will not see that the one thing that stands in the way of all our Utopias is the unwillingness to bear the Cross.' And just as certainly as Dr Matheson's hymn is spoilt by the omission of its culminating verse, so are all our efforts at social betterment rendered futile if we ignore the Cross.

It is only Calvary which can redeem our hearts from those same desires which, let loose on the world, work havoc and leave misery in their train. In Masefield's story of conversion, do you recall the words which brought the man to his awakening and new life?

> Saul Kane, she said, when next you drink
> Do me the gentleness to think
> That every drop of drink accurst
> Makes Christ within you die of thirst.
> That every dirty word you say
> Is one more flint upon His way,
> Another thorn about His head,
> Another mock by where He tread,
> Another nail, another Cross.
> All that you are is that Christ's loss.

Discipleship

Mark viii. 34.—'And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'

THERE is a little touch in this great and well-known saying of Jesus in St Mark's Gospel alone—'and he called unto him the multitudes with the disciples, and said unto them.' He makes it clear that these words were not spoken merely to the disciples. The teaching was not intended only for men who had separated themselves from the world, and who had dedicated themselves to a special mode of life, but for all men.

To be a Christian is not to accept the traditional beliefs or doctrines of Christianity. To lay prime stress on these is to miss the genius of the Christian faith. The apostolic life had its source in one thing, and one alone, personal loyalty to a Master. It is the Christian experience which is vital, and not the dogma. Suppose, then, that we ask: What will be the type of our experience? Let us state the process in three stages which are convenient for description, although not always divisible thus in fact.

1. We begin with *the historic fact* of Jesus Christ. Jesus has often been classed with other religious leaders and teachers such as Moses, Socrates, and Buddha. And doubtless there are elements in common between all these, but in one respect Jesus was unique. What Jesus taught, He was. He embodied and did not merely enunciate the truth. Consider, for instance, the central note of love in the Christian ethic. The precepts and commands concerning love in the Gospels can be paralleled in other of the world's teachings, but its practice cannot be found fully and completely in any other than Jesus Christ. He took love into every human relationship. It was the motive alike of His personal and of His social life. This unique element in the gospel-portrait compels attention, for it is always a challenge to men, and it cannot be ignored either by friends or foes. It was so in the 'days of His flesh,' and it is so still after nineteen centuries of inquiry and discussion. No one can ignore the fact of His dominant and challenging personality.

¶ 'The Christian Gospel,' says Dr J. D. Jones, 'is not a teaching merely, or a philosophy merely, or a morality merely; it is the gospel of a Person. It centres not simply in what Jesus says, but in what He was and did. Indeed, that is what differentiates Jesus from every other teacher and prophet the world has ever seen. He insists upon Himself. It sounds very plausible to say, "Let theologians quarrel about the Person of Christ; let us be content to obey His teaching"; but, as a matter of fact, in the light of the gospel narrative, there is only one thing to be said about this Christianity without Christ—it is another gospel, which is not another.'

2. The historic fact with which we begin becomes *a moral fact*, for it not only requires intellectual judgment, it also demands moral decision. Are we for Jesus and the things for which He stood, or are we against Him? The question cannot be evaded, for it is enforced by a sense of obligation. We have the feeling that we ought to live as He lived, and failure to obey that obligation issues in what is described in religious language as a 'sense of sin.' This is the characteristic reaction of Christianity upon the soul. Once face the fact of Christ and He becomes a fact of conscience. A new standard of moral judgment, a new sense of sin came into the world with Him. It is no accident that one after another of the world's time-honoured iniquities have disappeared from Christendom. The gladiator was one of the first to go; the status of womanhood is always a test of the Christianity of any community; in our own day duelling and slavery have gone, condemned as sin by the Christian conscience. But the Christian conscience does not stand still, and other iniquities are already being challenged in our modern civilization. One of the principal of these is war, and all the questions which gather about it. This, indeed, is likely to be the next great issue with which Christianity will have to deal. Either civilization must be reorganized on a warless basis or it is doomed, and between the Spirit and methods of Christ and the spirit and methods of the battlefield there is no possible reconciliation. One or the other must yield, and in view of the sense of obligation which the fact of Christ lays upon every Christian conscience, there can be no question as to the side which the follower of Christ must take.

¶ Speaking in the City Temple, on 21st February 1927, in support of the Campaign for Peace initiated by the Metropolitan Free Church Federation, Lord Oxford and Asquith said: 'Unless we can eliminate war, it will be the death of civilization, and of all that makes life—individual life, communal life, international life—worth living. There can be no effective safeguard of the most treasured possessions and promises of our race until we have wiped international warfare off the slate of possibility. That is no Utopian ideal. As difficult, if you like, as unimaginable things have been done. Slavery, private war, duelling were all regarded in their day as natural and even necessary institutions. Why and how have they disappeared? Not by repression, not by coercion, but through the operation of moral force which sapped their vitality, which discredited their authority, and which brought them, in due time, one and all, their message of doom. So it will be when, by the same agencies, the curse of war becomes, as it will become, a memory of the past.'[1]

This uneasiness of conscience, or growing sense of sin in regard to elements in our civilization, is due to the world's knowledge of Jesus Christ; for whenever men are conscious of Him they are morally disturbed. His life is a challenge to our sense of right and wrong. He is not merely a historic fact, but a moral fact which lays upon us a sense of obligation. We ought, and we know that we ought, to submit our life to the guidance of His Spirit. To do otherwise is sin.

The process of Christian experience, however, takes us further than this, for if not it would be merely provocative of despair as we face the fact of sin. Power is needed to overcome sin, and to be true to the Christian obligation, and this is the final stage of Christian experience.

3. The moral fact becomes *a spiritual fact*. We discover that Jesus Christ has for us the value of God. Once we have faced the fact of His life we cannot conceive of God except in terms of His character, and therefore we affirm that God is what Jesus was. He was the Image there amid the things of time of what God is all the time. Thus we arrive at the central affirmation of the Christian creed, and

[1] The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*.

yet we reach it not through dogma but through experience.

The significance of the Godhood of Jesus has a practical relation to our life, because if the Eternal God is seen in the Jesus of history, then to 'deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ,' means not the mechanical adjustment of our life to a historical example, but an instinctive and immediate response of soul to a spiritual presence whose character, purpose, and mode of action are exactly like those of Jesus Christ. Consequently, if we are conscious of sin as we face the fact of Christ, we can rely on the forgiveness of God. Also, as we face the Christian ideal which challenges our sense of obligation, we can pursue it in the confidence that to do so is to live and work in harmony with the power that governs the universe. Because God is like Christ, therefore He is on the side of the Christ-life, and He vindicates the way of Christian love, and in the long run He vindicates nothing else. That is not to say that the way of Christian life is easy: on the contrary, as we know, Christian fidelity may issue in persecution, suffering, loss, sacrifice, even death. The way of Christian love often seems to fail. We see that in the story of the martyrs, and most of all in the Cross of Christ. But Jesus never promised that the Christian life should be easy. What He did promise was 'power' to triumph even where life is hard. So Paul says: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,' recording an experience. Hence in the light of that experience we can say that the Christian way is the only way that can possibly win in a God-governed world. What else has endured through the ages? Culture? Violence? Cleverness? Wealth? All these have come and gone. But the only thing which the world has not been able to subdue is a life or a society energized by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is true that the world killed the martyrs, but 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.' Despite their death their witness triumphed, and so it is no chance that the Church is the only institution in the Western world which has survived through these nineteen centuries. In the measure that she has stood for the way and the Spirit of Jesus Christ she has been invincible.

So, then, to be a Christian means to start with the Founder of Christianity. But the process does not end until we respond with soul and conscience to the moral challenge of Christ's life of love. Such response is not easy, for the life of Jesus found its climax in the Cross. But we shall dare to make the venture when once we see in the face of Jesus the image of the Eternal. For then we shall know that to 'follow Him' is verily to walk with God.

Self-Sacrifice and Self-Realization

Mark viii. 34, 35.—'And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.'

THIS is a saying which our Lord appears to have repeated more than once. There is no reason why we should suppose that Jesus uttered the more striking of His great sayings only once. The probabilities are far otherwise. When we examine the meagre record of His teaching which has come down to us, and note therein the occasional reiteration of some great spiritual principle or some new point of view, we may be fairly sure that this was not infrequently done, and that the sayings which would be most likely to be preserved were those which He took the trouble to repeat. This is one such, as we cannot but observe from a careful reading of the various forms in which it is presented. Evidently, therefore, the Master attached considerable importance to it.

¶ We naturally interpret this saying as a reference to the Crucifixion, but it would have conveyed little meaning to His disciples if that had been its primary reference. But, in days when crucifixion was the normal method of execution, and the death penalty was awarded lightly and for offences comparatively slight, the spectacle of a condemned man carrying the cross along the path to the place of execution was one of common occurrence. The equivalent then, it has been said, in modern language to this famous saying of our Lord would be something like this: 'If you think to be one of my disciples, remember you are living with a halter round your neck.' The true disciple of Christ is one who must dare to differ and dare to die.[1]

[1] B. H. Streeter, in *The Guardian*, May 27, 1927.

We may gather from the context that Jesus had begun to discern the shadow of the Cross falling upon His own pathway. We are told that the occasion was His definite announcement of His coming rejection, betrayal, and murder. He knew only too well what form the last named would be likely to take; it would be crucifixion, death in the most ignominious form that triumphant malice could inflict. At the beginning of His ministry there are indications in the Gospels that He thought the world would listen to His message, and deep and bitter must have been His disappointment when He found that it was not ready for it. As He saw the end drawing near He tried in the words of the text to reveal the fact to those who loved Him best. 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.' It will be a daily acceptance of the Cross, a consistent denial of your own particular self-hood; there is no other way of arriving at the highest of all.

1. Is it then true, or is it not true, that self-denial, self-sacrifice, is the royal road to our spiritual goal? We live in an age which has been but little disposed to accept this principle as a guide of life. On the contrary we have been hearing on every side for a good number of years past the gospel of the right of the individual to absolute liberty in self-indulgence. We are impatient of authority, with comparatively little sense of what is due from the individual to the body politic. We have been far more ready to insist upon rights than duties. Perhaps nothing has been more characteristic of the twentieth century. Up to a point, most of us, no doubt, are in sympathy with it; there are many artificial shackles needing to be struck from the limbs of humanity. But there is no more soul-destroying form of evil than licence masquerading as liberty; for there is no true liberty which is not rooted deep in the sense of moral responsibility and social solidarity.

¶ Edward Everett Hale, in his story of *A Man without a Country*, has dramatized the fate of a man who, on the plane of civic loyalty, utterly forswore the larger self. Philip Nolan, in a fit of anger, said that he could wish that he might never hear the name of America again. His wish was granted. All the rest of his life he was to sail upon a vessel of his country's navy, free to do as he pleased so long as he never heard his country's name or stepped upon her shores. At length the thing that he had desired became his direst torture. He had saved a part of himself, but flung away his loyalty, and year by year he came to know that life was shame and ashes without the thing which he had lost.[1]

And yet it has to be recognized that the desire for self-expression—which at first sight seems the very opposite of self-sacrifice—is one of the most urgent in human nature, and lies at the root of all the finest achievements of the race, in art, science, politics, religion. It can be debased or destroyed, but without it no work of noble note has ever yet been done. Take any beneficent form of human activity, wherever you find good work being done, done with high motive and noble aim, the doer giving himself unsparingly for an object beyond and above what he knows of himself, you will find an expanding soul. The law holds good without exception that work done in such a spirit brings more abundant life to him that does it. And it is this more abundant life that we are all seeking.

We are all conscious of latent powers which have never found expression. We have dim and unsatisfied yearnings for a beautiful and thrilling life. We are vaguely conscious that we are greater than we know and greater than anyone else knows. It is an underlying, often hardly realized faith, that there is something in us more worthy, more heroic, more capable of love and devotion than has ever come to the surface and found expression in our common daily life. We have gifts which have never found employment, we have capacities which have never been exercised. We are living such repressed and narrow lives. We are just concerned with daily bread and with the drudgery of life, and within us there is an immortal soul, capable of something infinite and feeling itself in chains. Those are not the most Christian men and women who are entirely content with the littleness and repression of their existence, and who allow 'custom to lie upon them with a weight—

Heavy as frost and deep almost as life.'

It is against this belief—that we are the slaves of law and circumstance, that disappointment and thwartings and narrowness are the natural

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Inescapable Christ*, 43.

doom of life to be accepted with resignation—that the gospel of self-realization protests. The gospel of Christianity protests against it too, with a more fervent faith and with more sustained energy.

2. The ultimate ideal of Christianity is Life, ever fuller life—eternal life. It does not make for repression or negation. It makes for life and love in their most perfect and complete form. The gospel of Jesus is essentially affirmative; it is the way to fuller life. To know the joy of pure and perfect love, to have the vitality which comes to a passionate nature held in strong control, to feel the thrill in Nature and in art, to find in common things their underlying grandeur and significance, these are the dim yearnings of the soul; and the way of attainment to such a life is through denying ourselves, bearing our cross, and following Christ. To follow Christ is to realize ourselves. His life was perfect self-expression. It was a life of many limitations, full of many disappointments, thwarted, hindered, heavy laden. His great hopes for men were unrealized, His aims were misunderstood, His love was flouted, His words seemed to fall like seed by the wayside or among thorns. What life could seem more wasted, more frittered away in uncongenial surroundings! How entirely He seemed to be outside the great political and social movements of His time! And yet we feel in Him, dying as He did in early manhood, the completest self-realization. His love, His thought, His energy were not wasted. He died to live, giving Himself gladly to the service of mankind, following daily the guidance of His Father. There was no bitterness, no complaint, no fretfulness in His life. He found in the circumstances and among the commonplace men and women with whom He lived the means for fullest self-realization. He carried a cross which led through pain and death to Immortality. We all may do the same. The deeper, fuller life for which we all are longing depends on obedience to the highest, on faithful persistence in well-doing, on courageous thought and effort in following after the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Self-denial is not the giving up of a present good on behalf of something better in the future. It is the affirmation of our best self at the moment, a glad obedience to the will of God.

¶ I can guess from your letter that some questions are troubling your mind about the best way of self-realization. There can be no single path for all individuals; for we vastly differ in our natures and habits. But all great masters agree in their teaching on one cardinal point, saying that we must forget our personal self in order to attain our spiritual freedom. Buddha and Christ have both of them said that this self-abnegation is not something which is negative—its positive aspect is love.

We can only love that which is profoundly real to us. The larger number of men have the most intense feeling of reality only for themselves; and they can never get out of the limits of their self-love.[1]

¶ As we went in to see the institution we were taken first of all into the little chapel for quiet prayer. There was something in the place that could only be seen through prayerful eyes. The three hundred children lived in cottages, each cottage under an Indian girl with about a dozen tiny children in her charge. 'How much do you pay these young women who care for all these children?' I asked. The lady replied, 'It is very expensive work, for they have to be up at all hours of the day and night. It is too expensive to pay for, so none of us get a salary; we all do it through love.' And love had begot love, for one could feel it in the very atmosphere. And love in turn brought forth joy. I have never seen such joy on the faces of people.

As we walked out of the place in reverent silence, my professor friend broke it by saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto Dohnavur.'[2]

3. 'For my sake,' He says to His followers. To justify sacrifice there must be a personal object to which the sacrifice is made. Love for Him makes sacrifice unconscious; it carries with it always gain and never loss for the soul; and it has effect for the redemption of humanity. This works in a wonderful way. The early Christian martyrs laid down their lives on a formal issue of loyalty to Christ; but the effect of that sacrifice was to overthrow for ever the absolutist state. It is equally demonstrable that all great sacrifices for conscience have resulted in the purchase of essential liberty for

[1] *Rabindranath Tagore: Letters to a Friend*, 76.
[2] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 105.

mankind. When one is completely swayed by love and loyalty to Christ, one is rendered absolutely fearless. We are ready at any moment to risk this life, by life in Him, for life with Him. This frees our sacrifice both from prudential calculation and from the fanatical search for martyrdom. Notice that the text condemns *seeking* to save one's life; but it does not praise *seeking* to lose one's life. And when a man comes to the issue where life has to be let go, it is only in fulfilment of the inner renunciation of 'hating' his life made long ago. We do not have to wait to sacrifice ourselves in some dramatic death; we live *or* die by the one principle.

Man's True Value

Mark viii. 36, 37.—'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

'WHAT doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his own life?' That is a familiar and dominant note in the Master's teaching. It presents the abiding contention between the material and the moral; between the noisy seeking of things and the serene attraction of character; between the amassing of possessions and the enrichment of life: that is the issue ever present, ever urgent, ever aggressive.

Our Lord does not only set before men, in vivid and arresting contrast, the relative advantages of living under the alternative dominance of high and low ideals, and challenge them to decision. He actually declares that a man has within himself latent values which in enduring worth surpass everything external. It is as true to say that He came to reveal men to themselves as that He came to reveal God to men. For His entire life among men was a progressive demonstration of their own worth. It is as though He reasoned that to convince them of their proper value and destiny is the surest way of winning them from the destructive entanglements of a false valuation, and from the service of ideals which ignore or exclude God.

1. It is one of the most perplexing mysteries of life that men who believe in Jesus, who give intellectual assent to the statements of His gospel, do not in actual practice take Him seriously. They have no doubt that He is 'the Way, the Truth, the Life'; but along with this conviction comes a disturbing sense of the difficulty involved in actually taking such direction, in practical affairs, as He indicates. Surely in days like these, they say, when life is so much more complicated, when the roots of its various relationships are so much more closely tangled than when He spoke the simple language of more or less primitive peoples, it is impossible to regard His precepts as binding! And yet most men who give Him any place of faith, even when they assume such dispensation from the obligation of obedience, have an uneasy consciousness that He really does mean what He says on every subject, and that He actually does intend His followers to 'walk even as He walked.'

Mr G. K. Chesterton says that the first time you read the teachings of Christ you feel that they turn everything upside down; but that the second time you realize that they turn everything right side up! Of course, some of the things He said, like this amazing proposition, are so fundamentally opposed to our ideas of prudence that we stumble at them. But then He never professed to be prudent! There are times when what is called 'prudence' is just sheer disloyalty to Truth.

So, in facing this challenging word of Christ in regard to the worth of men, if it perplexes us we may be sure, having regard to His personality and unmistakable intention, that the perplexity is born of our own confused minds. This is His view of man's worth—a view which He consistently maintained throughout His life and for the truth of which He ultimately died. For with Him a conviction involved a crusade.

The prophets and teachers of an earlier day, speaking generally, had viewed human life not in the light of its immortal value, but rather in the shadow of its pathetic incompleteness and transitoriness. They sang its meaning not in the major notes of gladness and confidence, but in the wailing minor strains of regret and almost fatalistic acceptance: 'Man is as a thing of naught.' 'As a flower of the field he flourisheth' . . . to be cut down. His heart is 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.' They stressed—not its value, but its worthlessness; not its kinship with God, but its native distance from Him. In what vivid and arresting con-

trast to this view of life's worth did the teaching of Jesus stand. For, from the very beginning of His ministry, He declared that every man is a thought of God—in living expression. At the basis of all His evangelical promises and ethical precepts lay His estimate of the value of men—to God. The whole world and its content is not comparable to this! And setting this high worth upon a man—upon every man—He challenges him to order his life accordingly.

¶ Louis XVI. and his beautiful and unfortunate Queen died on the scaffold in the Place de la Revolution. The boy who ought to have inherited the throne of France, and who in fact, though he never reigned, has been numbered as Louis XVII. in the roll of monarchs, was left a prisoner. Evil had brought forth evil, as ever. An oppressed people had been roused to a spirit of devilish revenge. The child, it is said, was not only to be kept a prisoner and deprived of whatever rights he might be supposed to possess to the throne of his father, but all that was good in his nature was to be, if possible, destroyed. Evil men, placed round him, were to train his mind to evil thoughts, his heart to evil feelings, his lips to unlovely words. Naturally he suffered. But now and again, it is said, as his tormentors seemed to go beyond the limits of his endurance, or when God's voice prevailed in his young soul against them, the unhappy boy would waken up to higher things, and exclaim in anguish, 'I can't say it, I can't do it, for I was born to be a king!' [1]

2. It is not too much to say that most of the evils with which we are familiar in life to-day can be traced to their ultimate source in confusion of mind regarding the true values of human life. Individually, many men are living and toiling for purposes and ends which plainly evidence their inadequate view of themselves. By the use to which they put life they unconsciously declare their conception of its worth.

Still, as of old, man by himself is priced:
For thirty pieces Judas sold himself—not Christ.

Socially, also, the exploitations and injustices of long years, which have now produced profound restlessness, simply gave expression to unworthy and untrue views as to the meaning and value of life. Workers, for instance, were regarded as mere hands or machines. The sacred rights of human personality were not considered. And now, because the individual is awakening, the social order is tottering. Its re-organization around a new ideal, if such can be effected, is the only thing that will save it—save it by re-making it. Men who themselves make no personal profession of the Christian faith—writers, publicists, thinkers of all schools—are for ever telling us this, and are not slow to declare that that new ideal must be the ideal of Jesus in this very respect. They see the certainty and precision of His remedy for all human ills—that men should recognize mutually and practically the common sacredness of life, and its inter-relationship also by reason of its Divine origin and dependence. And they are right.

¶ There is a recent picture by the Scottish artist Gibbs, entitled *The Dream of Christmas*. It is a picture of a European city with its towers and spires rising in the moonlight, and through one of the narrow streets Christ passes with His shepherd's staff in hand and a little ragged, homeless child in His left arm. It is only personality that is priceless. This is why the religion of Jesus must always be revolutionary. It must be revolutionary until the whole world comes to understand that all men are brothers, that human life is the one priceless thing in the world and that all government and legislation, all industry and all science must become the servants of humanity to the end that all men may come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.[1]

In even wider sense than the merely personal and social this is true. The one hope for a world from which war has been banished as a barbarous anachronism lies in the growth of universal recognition that Christ's view of the value and significance of life is true, and final, and binding. And since the individual, and not the State, is the living and determining unit in every moral issue, it is an inescapable obligation upon all to live, in this matter, as God intended; and, primarily, to re-harmonize our entire thinking in regard to life-values with the plain revelation of Christ.

¶ Dean Inge has said: 'Institutional religion does not represent the gospel of Christ, but the

[1] W. J. Knox Little.

[1] H. T. Kerr, *The Gospel in Modern Poetry*, 141.

opinions of a mass of nominal Christians. It cannot be expected to do more than look after its own interests and reflect the ideas of its supporters. The real gospel, if it were accepted, would pull up by the roots not only militarism, but its analogue in civil life, the desire to exploit other people for private gain. But it is not accepted.'

3. Christ's own life, as a man, lived on the common human plane, is the most trenchant, searching, illuminating declaration of human worth available to us. For His very existence here proclaims the fact that man is capable of sharing the Divine life, of carrying out the Divine Will in the world, and of mediating here the Divine influence. And it is on this assumption that He proceeds in all His dealings with men. One of the finest of the prophetic spirits of an earlier day had visioned a great truth when he said: 'My people is destroyed for lack of knowledge.' He had seen that humanity in general had failed to realize its true destiny. And Jesus took up the story, pointed its blunt edge and pierced men's consciences, until their self-consciousness awakened to reality. And He is still doing it. He says that what a man gains of the world (that many-meaning thing—money, pleasure, power, all the objectives toward which men variously bend their energies) is no indication whatever of his actual worth. He insists, indeed, that swollen revenues and successes may mean a shrunken soul; and that every man's real worth in the final reckoning of things strictly accords with the use he makes of his spiritual possibilities. He affirms that the whole world (not only that small portion of it which at most any man secures) is as a mere nothing in comparison with his irreparable loss. It is all as simple as it is final.[1]

¶ 'The Christian religion,' says Harnack, 'is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only—eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God.'

4. In the warning which is implicit in the query, 'What shall it profit a man if——?' Christ certainly does not speak of a life being 'lost' merely in terms of a Future Judgment, although that sense is always there, since life is continuative. For we lose our souls in whatever impoverishes personality, in whatever dwarfs our moral stature. A man may be reduced in soul-dimension to the size of the factory, the shop, the office, the machine, to which he gives his life. For there are inexorable and self-registering adjudications of life declared daily in the enduring issues and consequences of his acts, his purposes, his intentions. Nor are there any gains in material things, or in the influence of position, to the one who has lost the central inspiration, who has deliberately declined to enter into vital union with the God for whose glory he was made and redeemed.

The man, on the other hand, who has learnt—and is learning—from Jesus the true worth of life; who has glimpsed something of its potentialities, cannot but look out upon all other lives in this transforming light. And, by honestly endeavouring to live in an attitude of unqualified recognition of the worth of all men, he cannot fail to make effective contribution toward the diffusion of that spirit which alone will establish a true and enduring social order. The protestings and unrest with which we are all familiar can only be allayed by the practical enthronement in our common life of Christ's law, with all its underlying conception of human values in the Family of God.

5. For us all this great word of Jesus receives its fullest interpretation and is baptized into a sacramental meaning at His Cross. It is there that we have His final and undying testimony to the worth of a man. Whatever else the Cross declares—and who can fully read its transforming message?—this certainly shines out from it for the world's enlightenment: that, to the mind of Christ, man was worth dying for, worth winning to his true life at such unspeakable cost. If we would know how arightly to look out upon life, and how worthily to adjust and maintain all its relationships, we must stand at the Cross, which for ever separates those to whom 'its solemn shadow is better than the sun' from all self-centredness. For it is there alone that we shall be gripped and constrained by the Love which passeth knowledge, until we find our place and fulfil our calling in the Will of God for the world's life.[1]

[1] J. S. Holden, *The God-Lit Road*, 353.

[1] J. S. Holden, *The God-Lit Road*, 363.

The Transfiguration of Christ

Mark ix. 2.—'And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.'

The Transfiguration of Christ is one of those wonderfully beautiful things which defy analysis or description. Vainly has the genius of poet and painter attempted to depict the glory of that event. The highest achievement even of a Raphael falls far short of the reality; and his great picture in the Vatican is in fact only a confession of the impotence of the loftiest art to rise to the level of the Divine. But while the actual wonder—the burst of splendour which irradiated and transformed the body of our blessed Lord—must remain for us a glorious, inexplicable mystery, there are many details connected with the event which we can study and bring out more clearly; and this will certainly help us to understand it better.[1]

1. In the first place, we ought to notice the time and the circumstances of the event. All the evangelists who give us an account of the Transfiguration make a special point of the date. They are particular to mention that it took place about a week after another event; and the obvious inference is that in the minds of the evangelists these two events were closely connected. As Dr A. B. Bruce puts it, this note of time is like a finger-post pointing back to the previous paragraphs, and saying, 'If you want to understand what follows, remember what went before.' What is it that came before? It was Christ's first announcement of the Cross: His first plain, direct, unmistakable declaration that His career on earth was going to end not in a throne, as the disciples had fondly imagined, but in a cruel and shameful death. Now that announcement produced something like dismay and consternation in the apostolic band. Peter's indignant but mistaken protest is just an index of their recoil from the thought of a cross for their Master. And it is no dishonour to our Lord Himself to say that the thought of the Cross was accompanied by a sense of repugnance in His own soul. Remember the prayer at Gethsemane and the agony. It was this that lent such deadly force to the temptation which Peter's mistaken affection put in His way. That was the mood of Jesus and of His disciples during the intervening week; and we must realize all this—the despair of the disciples, the grief and shrinking of our Lord—if we want to realize the meaning and purpose of this wonderful event that took place upon Hermon. For the primary end the Transfiguration was meant to serve was that of encouragement; the encouragement of the disciples, whose faith had been well-nigh shattered by Christ's announcement of His death, and the encouragement of our blessed Lord Himself. What happened on Hermon strengthened Him to bear the Cross, and by the grace of God to taste death for every man.[1]

2. It is St Luke who tells us that Jesus went up into the mountain 'to pray.' He separated Himself from the larger company, and took with Him His three closest and dearest disciples. There is something profoundly touching in this trait of Jesus' character, that He always, in every experience of the highest joy or the deepest sorrow—in the death-chamber of Jairus' daughter, at the grave of Lazarus, in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the Mount of Transfiguration—wished to have within call of His voice, and within reach of His hand, some friend whom He knew and trusted, some one who could give Him the sense of human sympathy.

> The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
> But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
> Alone the sun arises, and alone
> Spring the great streams.

It was not so with Jesus Christ, who in the tensest moments chose to have some of His friends beside Him, felt that their presence there, and their uncouth fumbling sympathy, did not jar, but helped.

The disciples were weary, weighed down with sleep. They folded their garments about them and rested, as an Oriental peasant can always do, upon the bare ground, under the roof of heaven. But Jesus prayed—prayed for them, that their faith might receive some encouragement, that their eyes might be opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to see the invisible

[1] H. Van Dyke.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, vi. 7–x. 31, p. 191.

glories about them; prayed for Himself, that He might receive some fresh assurance of His Father's love and favour to strengthen and support His heart. And then, as He prayed, and as He yielded Himself up, in this hour of communion with God, to an entire consecration to God's will, the inner ecstasy of His spirit shone out, not only in the radiance of His face, but also in the lustre of the tabernacle of His flesh. The face of Moses shone with so heavenly a light that he was compelled to veil it when he came down from his mount. The face of Stephen was like the face of an angel as he stood in his holy place. All faces shine when they lose themselves in the rapture of prayer. It is no marvel that Christ's face was transfigured and His raiment shone on this night of high communion with God.

¶ Dr J. G. Paton speaks of the rapt look on his father's face when he came out of the little room in which he held communion with God. It was almost the very first thing that impressed him with the reality of religion.

¶ We are told that Francis of Assisi, when absorbed in prayer, 'became changed almost into another man'; and once at least was 'beheld praying by night, his hands stretched out after the manner of a cross, his whole body uplifted from the earth and wrapt in a shining cloud as though the wondrous illumination of the body were a witness to the wondrous enlightenment of his mind.' The sympathetic vision of her closest companions saw Teresa's personality, when she was writing her great mystical works, so changed and exalted that it seemed to them that her countenance shone with a supernatural light. Again, St Catherine of Bologna, always pale on account of her chronic ill-health, was seen by her sisters in choir with a 'shining, rosy countenance radiant like light': and we are told of St Catherine of Genoa that when she came forth from her hiding-place after ecstasy 'her face was rosy as it might be a cherub's: and it seemed as if she might have said, Who shall separate me from the love of God?' In such reports we seem to see the germ of that experience which lies at the root of the story of the Transfiguration of Christ. As Moses came down with shining face from the mountain, so these turn toward the temporal order a countenance that is irradiated by the reflection of the Uncreated Light.[1]

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way*, 120.

3. Two men of titanic influence in the history of His race came to hearten Jesus and to strengthen Him with their understanding sympathy. 'There appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.' 'They spake,' Luke tells us, 'of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.' Our English version renders it 'decease,' but the Greek word is 'exodus.' It suggests emancipation, redemption, deliverance. And that was what the Cross meant: emancipation, redemption, deliverance for a world. Christ's disciples did not understand this. The bare mention of death flung them into a panic of despair. But the saints in glory knew what the Cross meant. It meant not defeat, but deliverance. By dying Christ was to accomplish an exodus. And they came and talked with Him about it.

4. Surely we cannot fail to see the purpose of this marvellous event. It was to uplift and cheer the soul of Jesus with the thought of the glory into which He should return by the sorrowful way of the Cross. It was a foretaste of the exceeding great reward of His sacrificial love. It was a touch of the joy of heaven to help Him to bear the sufferings of earth.

¶ John Bunyan, before he brings Christian and Hopeful to the cold waters of Jordan, takes them for a brief space to the land of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, and where the sun shone night and day, and where they had rapturous visions of the golden city whither they were journeying, with the result that the pilgrims were eager to cross the Jordan, and be there. And in much the same way Jesus enjoyed the glory of the holy mount and the converse of the shining ones before He tasted of the shame of the judgment and the Cross.[1]

The Transfiguration was a fresh assurance to Jesus of His Father's love, for there came a voice out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son.' His heart had been grieved by the dullness of the Twelve, the folly of the multitude, and the hostility of the rulers, but in that transcendent hour it was revealed to Him how His work was viewed by God and the glorified saints. Though He stood alone on earth, misunderstood, forsaken, and persecuted, He had Heaven's sympathy and approval. And from that hour He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

[1] J. D. Jones.

He taketh us
On a high mountain, nor forsaketh us,
But turneth round upon us, glistening
In face and raiment, as He were a King.
In converse we discover at His side
Moses, Elias. . . . He is glorified,
The Son of God: and Peter would abide
Forever with these three, and prays to rear
Three tabernacles. And the light grows drear.
Some sin is on us that no wise we wist;
We are closed up as in God's very fist;
We cannot see: only there floats above,
Rumbling and murmuring as an angry love,
Some element in havoc that doth press
Against the idle word that Peter said.
I know not by what stroke,
Beneath that awful cloak,
Elias and the Law-giver are brought
To nothingness in the Eternal Thought:
For presently we are allowed,
Through adumbrations of the cloud,
To hear the Father's Voice in its caress,
As if from Chaos sped
Toward that belovèd Head—
Jealous and watered as of rain-drop tears
That Voice appears
In majesty on the cloud's breaking rim:
'Lo, this is my belovèd Son; hear Him!'
The Lord is glorified; we see
His Body as in glory it will be—
Nothing it lacks
Save of His Wounds the lovely tracks.

I, John, who lay upon His bosom, I
Must testify
I never saw Him—now
I see Him in the Father and rejoice:
He standeth meek amid His snows,
Flushed as a rose,
For we have heard that Voice,
How maiden in humility His brow!
Almost He whispereth 'No word of this!
It is our secret: I should take amiss
That of this hour one word be said,
Peter, till I am risen from the dead.'
And, having spoken, He looks back on me,
And in an instant my theology
Is given; and I know the Word is God.[1]

[1] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 20.

The Cloister and the Crowd

Mark ix. 5.—'And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.'

THE disciples had seen wondrous things. They had seen Christ transfigured. They had looked on the face of Moses shining again with the light of the presence of God. They had marked Elijah's prophetic rapture. They had been caught up into the third heaven and had heard unspeakable words. Whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell. 'They wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid.' Peter's awed and amazed mind realizes that no spot on earth can be so heavenly as this place, and no experience of time can match its spiritual ecstasy. He breaks out into characteristic speech. 'Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' He wished to prolong the conference, to detain the visitors, and to make permanent the glory of Christ. He will build them booths such as men built in the Feast of Tabernacles, and under their shelter the heavenly intercourse shall continue through all the days. In a word, Peter proposed to set up the cloister. He had forgotten the crowd.

There is a time for the cloister and a time for the crowd in every man's life. But no man should live either wholly in the cloister or entirely in the crowd. Let us see where the distinctions of these complementary experiences lie.

1. *The Blessing of the Cloister Hour.*—'It is good for us to be here,' cried Peter, in his wonder and awe. Whatever may be the full meaning of these words, this at least Peter declares—that it is good to be in Christ's presence and to see His glory; to be under Christ's influence and so to be able to live at the highest and best; to be moved to holy thought and stirred by pure desire. To be up on that quiet hilltop out of the noise and strain, the fretting and chafing of life, was the opportunity of grace. How good that is every man knows who lives in the midst of the crowd, toiling out his long day amid the bustle of the world's traffic, and the grinding of its wheels. The man who is beginning to feel that

the burden of life is almost too heavy to carry, and the sorrows of life too desolating to be endured, craves for the quiet of the cloister with an intenser desire. And God gives His wearied ones this cloister hour. He sends them quiet days. He makes a silence in their lives. He leads the men of the deeper desire up some Hermon, and Christ is transfigured before them.

There is a passage in Wordsworth's *Prelude* which expresses both the craving and its satisfaction, with all the poet's high seriousness and moving simplicity. He had risen, in his unrest of mind, before the dawn. In the grey light of the morning, he brooded over his life and meaning. As the sun rose and flooded meadow and stream and the far-off shining sea with light, and as the birds awoke to song and the labourer came forth with quiet and honest content to his work in the field, all the stillness and charm of the scene fell upon him with refreshing and renewing power.

Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

It is a great gift of God to have the body and the mind and the heart calmed and renewed and healed by some influence from Nature or by some deep conviction of the good providence of God. But there is a deeper need than Nature or the kindliest circumstance of life can supply. There is a need which only the direct touch with God Himself can satisfy. There is an exhaustion and a weariness, a monotony and a distaste, which are more perilous than any weakness of brain or of nerve. Then the one true renewal is to see the King in His beauty, and to behold the land which is very far off. Here is a man who has had his hours of dedication, his years of chivalrous service. He has known the glow of a passion for the souls of men. But these hours pass away. His enthusiasm chills. His once willing service becomes a drudgery. The sacrifices which formerly gave him one of his purest joys are now too high for him. The secret of this dullness and decline is always this—that he has kept no cloister hour. He has forgotten his need of the isolation and silence and vision of the Mount.

2. *The Danger of the Cloister Life.*—The subtle temptation of the man who has known the blessing of the cloister hour is to crave for it as a constant felicity. Its emotion is a luxury; the vividness of its vision an entrancing delight. Its keen passion for righteousness burns up every lower desire with the swift ease of fire. The supreme need of the soul would seem to be to turn the cloister hour into the cloister life. In one of the most musical and best loved hymns of the Christian Church we find ourselves led by its writer to the verge of this temptation. There is no hymn which more tenderly expresses the joy of an absolved communicant than Horatius Bonar's solemn words—

Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face;
Here would I touch and handle things unseen.

But, as the hymn passes on, it approaches the peril of all ardent souls—

Here let me feast, and, feasting, still prolong
The brief, bright hour of fellowship with Thee.
. . . . . .
Too soon we rise; the symbols disappear;
The feast, though not the love, is past and gone.

No, the feast cannot, dare not be prolonged. To every communicant at the Lord's Table there comes that word to those who sat down at the first supper of Christ, 'Arise, let us go hence.' We do not rise 'too soon' if, for a single hour, we have held this communion with Christ. The peril would be our abiding too long under that high emotion and becoming overdominated by its exquisite feeling. That breeds the craving, not for the blessing of a chastened spirit, a clear light on the path, and a more resolved will to follow in His steps, but for the flow of a weakening and sentimental emotion. With a noble loyalty to the truth, the writer of the hymn catches himself up and, in soberer and wiser and devouter words, sings—

The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here,
Nearer than ever, still my Shield and Sun.

We need the cloister hour, but not the cloister life.

¶ In *The Times* of 18th October 1924 there was the report of a meeting held in London to commemorate Mallory and Irvine, who were last observed on the skyline near the summit of Mount Everest. At that meeting it fell to Mr

N. E. Odell to tell what he knew; and what he knew was—the last that was seen of the two fated men. He tells us that on the last day, when he had gone out to find traces of his two companions, he had reached a point beyond which, conditions being what they were, and the hour of the day being what it was, he knew he need proceed no farther. Nearby there was a spur which rose about a hundred feet. This he climbed to take one last look towards the summit which at the moment lay hidden in mist. As he reached the top there was a sudden clearing above him and he saw the whole of Everest—summit, ridge, and final peak—unveiled. A little later, in his descent, he paused and glanced back at the mighty summit above him.

'It seemed to look down with cold indifference on me and howl derision in wind-gusts at my petition to yield up its secret, this mystery of my friends. . . . And yet as I gazed again there seemed to be something alluring in that towering presence: I was almost fascinated. I realized that no mere mountaineer alone could but be fascinated; that he who approaches close must ever be led on, and, oblivious of all obstacles, seek to reach that most sacred and highest peak of all. It seemed that my friends must have been thus enchanted also; for why else should they tarry?'

Mr Odell noted in his mind in that exalted moment something which has always been acknowledged by those who have touched that rare level of experience. He speaks of its alluring, fascinating, enchanting quality—the kind of thing which Sir James Barrie more than once so exquisitely isolates and confirms. Something which whispers to you that *this* is surely better than ordinary life! Something that bids you stay! Something that seems to plead, 'Why go back to things again! Is not this good? Besides, it has cost you much to reach this high place and to be worthy of this initiation. Will you let all that labour go for naught, descending to the plains? For, if ever you desire to come back, and assuredly you will desire to come back, understand that you will have to pass once again through all the strain of rising from those low-lying places. Now that you are here, why not stay here! Why not come closer, nearer, farther in!'

It is the disabling fascination of the Unseen.[1]

[1] J. A. Hutton, *The Dark Mile*, 126.

3. *The Keeping of the Spirit of the Cloister in the Crowd.*—A Christian life which is to be healthful, and sane, and pure is to be lived not in the cloister but in the crowd. But the cloister spirit must be kept in the busiest throng. In the crowd our virtues are exercised and disciplined, and in the busy ways of men we find our sphere for the service of God. But the crowd is only our field to be tilled, the highway for our pilgrimage, the arena of our struggle. The secret of our life there lies in this, that we keep the cloister spirit within.

¶ William Canton, in his *Child's Book of Saints*, has set this truth in his charming version of the legend of St Simeon Stylites, the hermit who kept his vigils on the top of a pillar. For three years, through all its changing seasons, in sun and shower, by night and day, Simeon kept his lonely post, and schooled his soul in constant prayer. There came an angel who bade him come down from his strange oratory. He led the worn, emaciated, and half-mad man to a valley where a goose-herd lived, who in a simple piety kept his hours of prayer, and tended his flock in laborious hours of service. The hermit found the peasant, and with him a little child. Her father and mother had been killed by robbers when she was a mere babe. The goose-herd had rescued her, carried her home, nursed her, and taught her, and now she ran, in happy confidence and joy, by his side. The hermit looked upon them both, and God's Spirit taught him the lesson he needed. He cried to the peasant, 'Oh, son, now I know why thou art so pleasing in God's eyes. Early hast thou learned the love which gives all and asks nothing, which suffereth long and is kind, and this I have not learned. A small thing, and too common it seemed to me; but now I see that it is holier than austerities, and availeth more than fasting, and is the prayer of prayers. Late have I sought thee, thou ancient truth; late have I found thee, thou ancient beauty; yet even in the gloaming of my days may there still be light enough to win my way home.'

We follow One whose life knew the cloister hour, whose heart loved the crowd, whose years were a constant keeping of the cloister spirit in the crowd. He came down from His hour of Transfiguration to the crowd around the epileptic child, to the crowd who thronged Him in the city, to the crowd who went up the way of

weeping to Calvary, and to the crowd in whose midst He died.

¶ St Francis is of the race of mystics, for no intermediary comes between God and his soul; but his mysticism is that of Jesus leading His disciples to the Tabor of contemplation; but when, overflooded with joy, they long to build tabernacles that they may remain on the heights and satiate themselves with the raptures of ecstasy, 'Fools,' he says to them, 'ye know not what ye ask,' and directing their gaze to the crowds wandering like sheep having no shepherd, he leads them back to the plain, to the midst of those who moan, who suffer, who blaspheme.[1]

Not always on the mount may we
Rapt in the holy vision be;
The shores of thought and feeling know
The spirit's tidal ebb and flow.

Yet hath one such exalted hour
Upon the soul redeeming power,
And in its strength through after days
We travel our appointed ways;

Till all the lowly vale grows bright,
Transfigured in remembered light,
And in untiring souls we bear
The freshness of the upper air.

The mount for visions; but below
The paths of daily duty go,
And nobler life therein shall own
The pattern on the mountain shown.[2]

Jesus Only

Mark ix. 8.—'And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.'

'THEY saw no man, save Jesus only.' That is what the disciples remember and will always remember. There is no longer any talk of building tabernacles of commemoration. They instinctively turn to come down from the mountain. There will be no publicity, for 'he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.' The disciples' conversation, coming down from the mountain, is not about the heavenly effulgence, or the spirit visitants, or even the Voice from out of the cloud, but about Jesus Himself. Quite plainly the final impression made upon their minds by a most wonderful experience is that of the aloneness of Jesus.

What these disciples saw in one vivid flashing moment is what the centuries have been slowly revealing. In the deepest questions of life or of death, or of the life beyond, there is one figure more dominant than all others. It is the figure of Jesus. It is so dominant that we are quite correct when we speak of Him as 'Jesus only.'

1. In the realm of religion, which is the most intricate of all realms, He moves with sure feet and calm confidence. Religion is the most intimate and difficult subject in the world. A man's religion is always being fashioned, always changing. He has not reached the end of it when he dies, but until the moment of his death his religion is constantly growing, it is for ever shaping itself in thought and experience.

¶ Dean Inge has said: 'We cannot make a religion for others, and we ought not to let others make a religion for us. Our own religion is what life has taught us. If we can clarify this body of experience, which comes to us so turbid and impure, we shall have done what is best worth doing for ourselves and we shall have to offer to others the best that was in us to give, however small its value may be.'

When religion is very vital it is very sacred. Most people can hardly bring themselves to speak of it at all. The most difficult element in a minister's life is that he must for ever be speaking on that subject concerning which most people keep silence. And yet there is one personality which comes into the midst of all this complex of thought and feeling with sure feet and irresistible power—it is 'Jesus only.'

Out of religion which is perennial comes religious organization which is static and has a constant tendency to decay. There will always be organized religion, but religion is the most difficult thing in the world to organize. There never yet was an organization which did not demand from its members the sacrifice of some

[1] Paul Sabatier, *Life of St Francis of Assisi*, 144.
[2] F. L. Hosmer.

of their convictions or preferences for the sake of united action. Either, then, we must deliberately consent that certain portions of life must be excluded from organized religion, or we must reduce the basis of the organization to the narrowest possible limits.

But this is just what religion finds to be almost impossible. It claims the whole of life for its province, and even annexes to it the life beyond. Consequently, if the organization be successful, it tends to become a tyranny. Some men will inevitably be forced into revolt; others will consent to a practical suppression of some of their convictions for the sake of utility. Revivals of religion have been originally, in every case, revolts, and their leaders were all rebels. So indeed were all the prophets of the old dispensation; so was Christ, and so were the apostles.

We have erred over-much in the rigidity of our religious organization, with the manifest result that all over the world to-day there is clash and confusion. But if there is anybody who can bring a spirit of unity into these complex organizations, it is 'Jesus only.'

2. In the realm of economics, which is the most stressful and disturbed realm in our time, we are coming slowly to see that there is one figure and one alone which can reconcile the jangling classes. It is the figure of the Divine One who yet was Carpenter. It is the figure of the Labourer who made labour Divine. He was Divine without finding labour derogatory: He was a labourer without lessening His Divinity. There is the Ideal to which both sides must approximate. As they meet in Him peace will come.

Out of economic necessities arise our world-politics. The questions that divide nations and frequently precipitate them into fratricidal struggle are at their base economic in character. Jesus is the reconciling personality between races and nations. We cannot quite say that of God, for when men say 'God' they read differing meanings into the august Name. They may worship the one and only Supreme Being, but their conceptions of His character are widely different. Nations have gone to war in the name of God. But they cannot do it in the name of Jesus. The Crusaders did, but it was His grave they fought for. In war-time we talk much of God but little of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount is suspended. Whenever we come to a crisis of that kind we slip back into the language of the Old Testament. Jesus has so revealed God that to see Him only is to stand confused with our weapons in our hands. This in the Christian belief is because He so reveals God that He drives from our mind those crude and untoward thoughts of the Deity which have cost us so much sorrow.

¶ In Miss Fry's book on the work done by the Quakers in the Great War, there is a remarkable statement in the preface. The Quakers, when the war began, were excused from military service on the understanding that they would care for the sick and wounded, and none could have shown more real self-sacrifice than they. But the condition was imposed that they were not to seek to spread their doctrine of non-resistance among the soldiers. They asked if there was any objection to reading the New Testament to soldiers in hospital. To that the official answer was given, after consideration, that, while the New Testament was all right, 'parts of it might be very dangerous.'[1]

So long as Jesus stands upon the summit of the Mount there is hope for the race. If a black cloud of denial and forgetfulness overshadowed Him instead of a cloud of glory, then the finger of doom would be pointing down towards the chasm. But so long as He stands there bathed in glory, the finger of hope is pointing up towards the height.

But when we think of the Mount of Transfiguration, we must think not only of its summit, but also of its base. On the summit of the mountain there stands the Christ enveloped in glory, but at the base of the mountain there writhes the poor epileptic, possessed, as they said in that day, of a devil. We have erred when we have sought to make the glory of Jesus a thing apart from the tragedy of life and have spoken of His Divinity as though it were a transcendental thing which had little or naught to do with the tears that flow at the base of the hill. The summit and the base of the mountain make one scene. Who believes in the Transfiguration of Jesus must labour for the transfiguration of man.[2]

[1] James Reid, *In Touch with Christ*, 128.
[2] F. W. Norwood.

'True, My beloved' (O hear the Lord!),
'Thy soul hath need of Me,
And lives but on My silent word
That haunts the mystery.

Yet ere our mystic trance be o'er,
Mine own elect, arise!
And bring Me Lazarus from the door
To heal his aching eyes.'

The Times of Silence

Mark ix. 9.—'And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.'

Twice while at Cæsarea Philippi Jesus laid the seal of reticence upon His disciples. We do not wonder that He forbade them to speak of Him as 'the Christ,' for His hour was not yet come. But we have some surprise that these three disciples should have been forbidden to speak to any man of what they had seen and heard on the mount. They had beheld Christ's glory. An adoring faith and a new consecration had been given them. It would have seemed to be their duty to tell the wondrous tale. But the command of Christ is distinct and peremptory. 'He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen.'

There is a well-known proverb, 'Speech is silvern, but silence is golden,' which has had but little force in the Christian life. To speak about God, and to speak for God, to be always ready with a word for Christ, has been set down as a gift to be coveted and a pre-eminent grace. There is a time to speak. Christ has called upon us to confess Him before men. Christian fellowship is one of the singularly powerful modes of light and strength. Open testimony has a well-marked blessing. For a man publicly to declare what God has done for him sets his will, nerves his courage, and roots his faith more deeply in his heart. For one man to make a public confession of Christ's name helps another, more timid and diffident, to stand by his side. The effect of a baptism of God's Spirit is often to open a man's lips. Speech has, indeed, a high place in Christian service.

But most men feel that this is not the whole truth. There are men and women, whose lives are often pathways of sacrifice, to whom all speech is difficult, and religious conversation is almost pain. There are others who can be fluent and eloquent in their testimony, yet whose lives are not free from grave faults. They are frequently coarsened and vulgarized by the exposure of their religious experience. It stands true that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, but that speech need not always be speech to men. It may be that daring soliloquy of which the Book of Psalms is full. It may be that speech with God while a man is musing and the fire burns. In the religious life, as elsewhere, speech may be silvern and silence golden.

1. *The Times of Silence in a Christian Life.*—In the things of the soul silence has often a high value. There are hours too sacred to be lightly spoken of. There are joys too rare and delicate in their bloom to be coarsely handled in common speech. There is a fellowship with God about which a man cannot babble without finding the door of the secret place shut upon him.

¶ There were three courts in the Temple at Jerusalem. There was the outer court, where even the Gentiles who cared nothing for the God of Israel or the faith of the Hebrew people might freely come. There was the holy place with its sacred things, where only the Hebrew worshipper might walk. There was the most holy place, over which the veil of the Temple hung, and into whose unseen and unknown seclusion the High Priest entered once every year, alone. There are these three courts in the life of a Christian man. There is the outer court, where a man who is living his life in the world must keep company with all who enter its circle. He must rub shoulders with the crowd, although he never forgets that they cannot enter into his secret. There is the holy place, where fellow-believers may pass, and speech and thought of the things of God have a gracious liberty. But there is the most holy place, and what passes there between God and the soul is to be kept with a guarded reticence until there is need for its being told.

¶ Be silent about great things; let them grow inside you. Never discuss them: discussion is so limiting and distracting. It makes things grow smaller. You think you swallow things when they ought to swallow you. Before all greatness, be silent—in art, in music, in religion: silence.[1]

[1] *Letters from Baron Friedrich von Hügel to a Niece*, p. ix.

The reasons for this sealing of the lips are as gracious as the command. Plainly, had Peter and James and John come down after the Transfiguration with a glowing account of the wondrous sight on the mountain top, they would have hindered Christ and wronged their own souls. Some who heard would have scoffed. Others would have aimed their barbed jests at these simple, sleep-bound dreamers. Others would have been too eager to believe that the Messianic King had come, and the land would have been ablaze with the re-kindled fire of zealotry. But the deeper reason lies in this, that all visions of the most holy place are too sacred for common ears, and are seldom to be spoken of to men. Had Peter stood forth to tell the story, had he gone up and down proclaiming this august and transcendent sight, how quickly he would have become vulgarized, a marvel-monger, a mere actor on the stage! Only as Peter and James and John kept it close within their brooding hearts did the certainty and significance of it stand out in increasing clearness. Its wonder, and beauty, and meaning became more vivid day by day, until, when Christ rose from the dead, the secret behind Christ's shining face was grasped and held.

2. *The Times of Speech in the Religious Life.*—'He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.'

(1) There are two marked occasions for speech, however costly, in religious things. The first of these is *when Christ needs testimony.* When doubt is casting a haze over the great certainties of the Christian faith, when trembling hearts are becoming despondent over the progress of the Kingdom, then the men who have seen Christ's glory are called upon to bear witness to it. There are epochs when faith in the unseen declines. There are times when the scholar and the critic who have not seen the face of the Lord speak with boldness of His empty tomb. What men need then is not merely the reply of a scholarship which is more competent and more careful, not merely the argument of a massive reasoning, not merely the eloquent pleading of a great conviction. It is the witness of a testimony.

¶ In *In Memoriam,* which is at once a memorial and the history of a soul passing from doubt to clearest faith, Tennyson sets this truth in two fervent stanzas—

> If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

There are other times than those in which a man is facing confident or scornful unbelief when testimony may have a peculiar power. One may find himself in the company of the open, accessible, sympathetic. He may find gathered round him young hearts which are waiting to hear the revelation of Christ.

¶ How fitting and noble was that act of testimony given by Professor Agassiz. He had gathered his students for a summer school of natural history in the island of Penikese. The large barn in which the class met was filled on the opening morning with expectant and eager minds. As he looked out upon them, gathered together on that lovely summer day, the solemn thought of God and His power and His love overcame him. They were young men of all ranks and conditions, of all faiths, and of no faith at all. He stood for a moment in hesitation, and then called upon them to join in silently asking God's blessing on their work together.

> Then the Master in his place
> Bowed his head a little space,
> And the leaves by soft airs stirred,
> Lapse of wave and cry of bird,
> Left the solemn hush unbroken
> Of that wordless prayer unspoken,
> While its wish, on earth unsaid,
> Rose to heaven interpreted.[1]

(2) There is a second occasion when we may break our religious reticence. That is *when some wandering soul needs light.* There are times in the religious history of every soul when the chief need is to see and know how another has entered into the pilgrimage. There is no light so clear or so kindly as that which gleams

[1] Whittier, *The Prayer of Agassiz.*

from another pilgrim's well-trimmed lamp. That is the peculiar office of wise religious biography. How many thousands have been led to the wicket gate by the *Memoirs of M'Cheyne*? The fascination of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is not its limpid and musical English and not its enchanting, imaginative beauty. Its power with men lies in this, that it is the revelation of an experience. Each man and woman who has seen the vision will come to the hour when the best service they can render to some erring or straying or despairing soul is to reveal the vision of the Lord.

¶ I know no tribute to Edward Irving finer than that paid to him by Thomas Carlyle. It was written nearly half a century after the incident it records. As Carlyle sets it down, he says that 'it remains always a colloquy to me of which the remembrance is wonderfully sweet.' Carlyle had been visiting Irving, then a young preacher in Glasgow, and Irving was giving him a convoy as he set out on Monday morning to walk to Annan. They came at the setting sun to Drumclog Moor. The talk had become familiar and more deeply interesting as the hours of the day had passed away. They sat down before bidding each other farewell. 'Looking into the western radiance we talked yet awhile, loth both of us to go. It was just here, as the sun was setting, that Irving drew from me by degrees in the softest manner the confession that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, and that it was vain for me to expect that I ever could or should.' How did Carlyle know what Irving thought of the Christian religion? How was Carlyle led to speak on this subject on which he was an unassured and bewildered man? It is not easy for two young men to unbosom themselves of their deepest religious experiences, all the more that they are close intimates in the intercourse of a college life. What is the picture behind this confession which Irving draws from Carlyle? It is that of one man, who has seen the vision in the mount, coming to the hour when he feels he must reveal it, with the silent prayer that the other also may see it.[1]

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Secret of the Lord*, 242.

The Second Opportunity

Mark ix. 17.—'And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit.'

One feels sometimes, in reading the Gospels, that no human eyes ever saw so much of the sorrows of the world as the eyes of Christ in those three short years of His ministry. The land poured out its misery to meet Him. His sermons were punctuated by piercing appeals for aid. His progress from town to town was attended by the great army of the sorrowful and disinherited. Yet it was as it should be. For did not Christ come into the world to save those human souls whom life had reduced to some position of need? In their distress and difficulty they sought Him out. Sometimes we find that the trouble from which they were seeking relief was their own. In most cases they were the victims of some bodily disease, which was making life intolerable for them.

They come to thee, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore;
Thy heart their well of life they find,
Thine ear their open door.[1]

Whatever may be the ultimate reason why pain and disease have a place in God's world, there is this light in the midst of the cloud: that bodily infirmity is perhaps the most crowded gate into the kingdom of the Spirit. There were others who went to Jesus not because they themselves were suffering, but because others were suffering who were dear to them. A mother besought Jesus to heal her daughter. Jairus sent messengers to Him when his little girl lay dying. A Roman officer asked Him to speak a word that his servant might be healed. And there is this story of a father who stood before Jesus crazed with grief and said: 'Master, I have brought unto thee my son!'

1. There is no season of our life which has not its own peculiar need of God. For example, as we get older and stand committed to more and more our faith loses its first simplicity. The first cry to God, the cry of our youth, is, in the

[1] George Macdonald.

case of most, a cry that He would keep us pure; that He would restrain our passion; that He would deliver us in some blinding hour of temptation; that He would turn our eyes from vanity and our feet from ways of darkness. But that is not the characteristic cry of the season which follows upon youth. In the ordinary course of a life we are introduced to new relationships and thus to new duties, new demands, and so to a new discovery of our need of God. It is the season of responsibility, not for ourselves only but for those whom life has bound to us, whom love binds to us, and duty, and certain dim and inalienable ties. 'Lord, save me, I perish' is the cry of youth; 'Lord, I have brought to thee my son' is a later cry when life has come to mean for us more and more.

2. We read that the father had taken his boy in the first instance to the disciples of Jesus—in the absence of Jesus Himself. The disciples had tried to heal the boy and had failed. Now that raises a question. Our Lord, previous to this, had given His disciples power to work such miracles, and they had used that power successfully. Why did they fail here? They failed because when they were brought suddenly face to face with this demand they were put off their own centre of power. They saw only the difficulty: they forgot the Power which they had it in their own hands to invoke. And so when we fail to-day in all the greater enterprises for our own deliverance, or for the deliverance of others, there is always a touch of guilt—we think far too much of the greatness of the task, and far too little of God who is there waiting to be used as He can be used only through our willing and consecrated lives. We fail because we allow ourselves to fall out of communion with Him, without whom we were of course bound to fail.

I fail when I remember mine own weakness,
When I remember that I am but dust;
But when I see Thy power, O risen Jesus,
And in Thee put my trust,

Then I am strong; then I can do Thy bidding
And live a life of victory and praise,
For Thou, in whom Thine own may always triumph,
Hast strength sufficient for our hardest days.[1]

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 16.

But, although the disciples who failed were themselves to be blamed, they were not alone to be blamed. The people who stood by who watched them fail had likewise their share of the guilt. And that is always the case. It may be that none of us would fail in an irrevocable way if those round about us, by their sympathy, by their goodwill, by the pressure of their kind and loving thoughts about us were resolved that we should not fail. The disciples failed because they were surrounded by an idle and curious and hostile body of people, by people who did not believe in them and who really wanted them to fail.

3. When Jesus came upon the scene He immediately took action. As He looked upon the child 'straightway the spirit tore him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.' Perhaps the sight of the boy in such misery brought about a change in the temper of that crowd, making them more serious. Then Jesus spoke to the father. In the poor man's rambling and excited answer we can measure his anxiety and sorrow. It was a relief to him to speak. And so he talked on and on, and ended piteously: 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.' And now we see how Jesus meets his perplexity. 'If thou canst!' He said, repeating the man's words, 'If thou canst!' 'All things are possible to him that believeth.' It was as though He said: 'There lies your child in pain. Here am I with the will and with the power to deliver him. But my power, in order to get to work, needs a channel, a medium of faith. Hast *thou* this faith? Everything is possible if *thou* believest.'

At this the man was struck silent, for Christ's words were finding their way into unsuspected places in his heart. Was it that those words came to mean for him something like this: Have I any right to expect God to accommodate me, while I myself stand in no definite relation to God? Has any man the right to expect anything from God who has not given himself to God? This man asks me if I have faith. I see what He means—do I myself really and truly believe in the Holy One, whom I am invoking to deliver my son?

In some such way did he put the question to himself. Was he really prepared himself to have direct dealings with God? To speak plainly, was

he prepared himself to become a good man for the sake of his son? Then humbly, and with the fine bearing of a man who sees his way and knows that it is going to cost him something, urged by his fatherly love, the man said: 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.' And Christ spake the word and the boy was restored to his father: as boys generally are restored, soon or late, who have such fathers to plead for them.

4. We have here the story of a man coming to Christ—coming to seriousness, coming to God, out of a sense of responsibility and anxiety for his son. The world to-day is full of stories of the kind. Parenthood is a kind of second opportunity which God offers to those who may not have taken advantage of the first opportunity. Those who did not come to Christ, out of the peril and treachery of their youth, or borne on its generous enthusiasm, God sometimes reaches by this second call. We should all be good, serious, humble people, walking softly and not presuming; for we live in a world where beneath the surface everything urges us to gentleness and to faith. But there are many things in addition which appeal to parents. We may imagine it to be the experience of many that, like the father in this story, they have secretly come to Christ, to the spiritual mind, through a concern for their children. For, though our children must live their own life in the world by their own motives and on their own responsibility, still in some mysterious way we live in them and they in us. When they suffer, we suffer. When they rejoice, we rejoice.

¶ Lord Morley quotes the diplomatist and philosopher, Joseph de Maistre, whose theories made a deep impression on the mind of Comte, as writing to his young son soon after he had joined the army: 'This morning I felt a tightening at my heart when a pet dog came running in and jumped upon your bed, where he finds you no more. He soon perceived his mistake, and said clearly enough, after his own fashion: "I am mistaken; where can he be then?" As for me, I have felt all that you will feel, if ever you pursue this mighty trade of being a father.' [1]

Should everything else fail to bring us to the feet of God, surely it will be enough for us to remember our children and the long and difficult road they have to go. As we think of them, and how in some potent though mysterious way we are so bound up with them that we share in their spiritual fortunes—is it not as though something deep, elementary, not to be questioned, but only to be obeyed, were urging us on to make a happy and final consecration of ourselves to some one who we dimly believe can help us and them—even to Jesus Christ Himself? [1]

¶ A young father wrote: 'The possession of a child of one's own opens up the possibility of an entirely new world of experience, and therefore of an entirely fresh revelation of the First Author and Supreme Object of all experience. . . . It was as if the Father in heaven had fairly (if it is not irreverent to say so) shaken hands—offered me His hand—and said, Thou art forgiven.' [2]

¶ W. E. Henley writes of

A little, exquisite Ghost
Between us, smiling with the serenest eyes
Seen in this world, and calling, calling still
In that clear voice whose infinite subtleties
Of sweetness, thrilling back across the grave,
Break the poor heart to hear:—
'Come, Dadsie, come!'

The Answer of Faith

Mark ix. 24.—'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'

What exactly do these words mean? Was the father looking to the measure of his own faith first, and asking Jesus to help by giving him such an increase of faith that all things—even the healing of his boy—might be possible? Or was he putting the boy's need first and pleading with Jesus not to let him suffer for the poorness of his father's faith? May we not say that both were meant? Emotion does not confine itself strictly to one thing at a time: and inconsistencies which are present in feeling often burst forth together, shouldering and competing with one another for immediate utterance. 'Help me out of my unbelief, but also help me in spite of my unbelief,' may not be logical; but emotion has a language of its own, very rich and con-

[1] *The Works of Lord Morley*, xii. 153.

[1] J. A. Hutton. [2] Hubert L. Simpson.

densed, and desires, not justified in logic, are often hurried and tumbled together in its full flood. So we shall hold to these two readings as moving together in the one stream of petition.

1. If only I had more faith, cries this man, then my boy might at once be well! When a whole year's work was burned, Carlyle wrote in his Diary: 'Oh, that I had faith! Oh, that I had, then were nothing too hard or strange!' Jesus had spoken of the boundlessness of faith, which makes all things possible, and the father felt as if a whole world of wonder were waiting at his door, kept outside by his own defect.

It is still true that by faith men work righteousness, and obtain promises, and turn to flight armies, so that nothing may be dismissed as out of reach. God the Almighty has said, 'I will be with you,' and there is no limit to what that promise contains.

¶ The abolition of slavery, though generally connected in the public mind with Wilberforce, and to some extent Clarkson, had as its real pioneer Granville Sharp, who, at first alone and unaided, fought the battle for the freedom of the slaves on British soil. The younger men caught his spirit, and, fired by his enthusiasm, carried the work on till the emancipation of all slaves in the British colonies became law. Ranged against him were the sailors who engaged in the traffic, the merchants who profited by the sales, and the indifference and ignorance of the public. But the young man was undaunted. As no lawyer could be found to defend the negro, Sharp set to work to study Law himself, sitting up far into the night over his legal records, and becoming himself a sort of slave to the freedom of the slaves. He spent all his leisure and means in the cause of emancipation, living long enough to know that the campaign would be fought to a finish.

Lowell, in describing Lloyd Garrison, the pioneer of the Abolition of Slavery in the States, shows the hills of difficulty that he, too, overcame.

In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,
Toiled o'er his types one poor, unlearned young man;
The place was dark, unfurnitured, and mean;
Yet there the freedom of a race began.
Help came but slowly; surely no man yet
Put lever to the heavy world with less:
What need of help? He knew how types were set,
He had a dauntless spirit, and a press.

¶ 'I always go on until I am stopped,' said Shelley, '*and I never am stopped.*' 'Nothing shall be impossible unto you,' said Jesus.

In the great matter of personal salvation this rule or method applies. The righteousness of God, that 'darling and comforting word,' as Luther called it, which means forgiveness, and God's friendship and the banishing of fear, is secured by nothing else than faith, which brings the general announcement of God's mercy home to the individual man. Instead of a vague assertion that he believes in the forgiveness of sins, a man ventures on the personal declaration, 'I believe in the forgiveness of my sins'; and the inserting of that possessive pronoun makes a whole world of difference to his feeling and his outlook. Faith, which is a personal trust in a personal God, is the temper which stands aside and suffers God to work. Ruskin maintains that 'the root of every heresy is the effort of men to earn and not to receive salvation, to work rather than to see God working for them.'

One familiar illustration of faith in exercise is taken from the experience of a child learning to float. At first he imagines that since there is nothing to support him, he is bound to sink, so he splashes, and struggles, and actually goes under. But in a while he begins to realize that there is a support which can be enjoyed if he will give himself over to it; and once that lesson is learned, the pleasure begins. About us and beneath us at all times is a Power immeasurable and unwearying, and a real exhilaration is felt when we cease from struggling and trying to save ourselves, and lie back, committed to that care and strength. In our homes, at the turning of a tap, the water gushes freely; but no one imagines that his act has brought the water there. Far up in the hills the store has been gathered from springs which rise among the ancient rocks, and every summer shower and every dismal day of fog or downpour has brought its contribution. Our part in this is not to create, but to take advantage of what has already been created for our use. And in higher spheres of activity, results which move our admiration are not claimed by those in

whom they appear; it is the Lord's doing, they say, and our part has been to give Him free way. Why should the Almighty not do amazing deeds as of old? To those who are content to stand aside and to be of no account, Jesus says that nothing shall be impossible.

2. If I had only more faith, my boy might be well, said this poor father; but in his mind there rose a further question—Will God refuse help to him because of what is my fault? Is His kindness hampered by disabilities of mine? That is a grave question. Many people never begin to help others, because their heart warns them that they will make little of it. They wish that they had faith like their neighbours, and they watch the ebb and flow of their own confidence; but they do not work deliverance, and, in that mood, they never will.

But this does not mean that help may not come to those who need along other channels. The God we have to do with is not bound to wait for the perfecting of faith in some particular agent; of Him it is said that 'He delighteth in mercy,' and He does not leave to any man the deciding word about another's life. From those who hesitate He may withdraw the sacred privilege of being of use to their fellows; but the compassion of God is free, and He can find other ways of striking in to heal and save. We must not unduly exalt the human element so as to obscure the Divine activity, for He is waiting to be gracious. In the story of revelation a certain clearing and ennobling of the human mind may be observed, such as made it able to receive larger ideas of the Divine; and along with this account should be taken of the resolute effort of men who have pushed against every obstacle in the way of their knowing. These are human contributions to the story, which must not be ignored. But the first place must be given to the gracious activity of a God who wishes to be known of His creatures. He acts through those whom He has prepared and qualified, but He can also act apart from them; and this man was not in error when, admitting that his own faith was no better than unbelief, he yet dared to ask the Lord directly to help his boy.

We may suppose that every believing man has had some visitings of doubts. Questions arise, mists drift across our view; mental and bodily health are not constant, and they quickly affect our assurance. Even in people of very simple nature shadows remain lurking in corners of the mind. Luther declared that 'the only faith that makes a Christian is that which casts itself on God for life or death,' but he confesses that there is also a faith which is 'an unutterable sigh.'

¶ No two men could have been more unlike than Maurice and Kingsley, and yet their lives were braided together in friendship. Maurice was one of the deepest and noblest minds the English Church has known; 'a spiritual splendour,' Gladstone called him; lofty, lovely, austere in his purity, fruitful in his thinking, and prophetic in his emphasis upon the social meaning of the gospel—a man of profound faith, the key to which is found in his letter to his mother in her perplexity. Kingsley was a poet, a teller of tales, a passionate humanist, vivid of soul, enthusiastic, impulsive, a lover of science, and an apostle of the out-of-doors—withal, a noble preacher, who linked sanitation with salvation, and revealed what great things can be done in an English country parish. Yet these two men, busy in the love of God and the service of man, were both tormented to the very end by the keenest doubts. More than once Kingsley wrote to Maurice telling him that his faith was all gone, and asking for a word of comfort and cheer. Maurice, on his part, had grave misgiving of his own. For several years some member of his family died at Easter, and the day of joy began to bring with it a sense of dread. At last, on Easter Day, 1872, Maurice himself lay dying, and his wife read to him the story of the walk to Emmaus, unconsciously repeating the words, 'vanished out of their sight.' He said, 'Yes, vanished out of their sight, which means that He abideth with them forever.' Later he said, looking out of the window at the people going to church, 'All those men who are walking there, with their doubts and thoughts, whether frivolous thoughts or earnest thoughts, want a friend to join himself to them and bring them out; not to quench their doubts, as I too often have done.' Kingsley, as his wife tells us, came to his end with 'the far look,' the longing for rest and reality, and for the unfolding of the mystery of life which had fascinated and baffled him.[1]

But when man or woman dwells upon his distrusts as a reason for doing nothing and for

[1] J. Fort Newton.

making no progress, he becomes his own gaoler; for the hindrance lies not in that alone but in his failure to use what faith he has. This man was conscious that his was hardly worthy of its name, and yet, in the vehemence of his desire, he was not ashamed to ask for what he craved, and the Master granted the request. With such a Lord as ours, whose nature it is to give Himself at all times to the weak, we do not need to wait for the appearing in ourselves of something high and passionate and worthy. If we would begin where we are, with such faith as we have, we should never find Him fail.

Proceeding on the Positives

Mark ix. 24.—'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'
Matt. xvii. 20.—'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed.'

Each of these utterances is contemplating faith in its smallness. In the first, its meagreness evokes an almost despairing cry. In the second, it evokes a confident prophecy. Yet the first has in it all the promise of the second. It is a prayer on its way to become a fulfilled prophecy. If any man say, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' it makes all the difference possible whether his emphasis is on the first clause or the last.

1. The thing this man of the story put first was that he did believe. It was not much faith, but it *was* faith, and on it he ventured himself, though it was with a cry. Faith so small was his that, aware of it at one moment, he was unsure of it the next, yet since he knew it was there he put it first. Our unbelief, or our not-belief, may be of vastly greater magnitude than our belief, yet our belief, be it ever so small and intermittent to our consciousness, is of vastly greater significance.

There was a man whose eyes Jesus had opened, and who was fiercely cross-examined on the thing that happened to him. He was unable to give an entirely intelligible account of it. He could explain nothing, and he knew nothing even of the person who had healed him. But his mind worked positively before it worked interrogatively. It fastened on what he knew and refused to be drawn off. 'One thing I know.' It is well enough for us to get our doubts into the light and survey them with fearless eyes and a judging mind, but we can never do this wisely if we are at the same time ignoring our convictions. There is a negative perversity in most of us by which we are commonly more impressed by what we do not possess than by what we do, and are more persistent in brooding over the blessings we lack than we are in utilizing with thankfulness what we have. Our convictions are more significant than our doubts. It may be that the doubt looms large and the conviction seems unimportant and feeble. But a positive conviction is never unimportant, and we were wiser if we made, not our hesitations and negations, but our assurances and convictions the starting-point of our inquiries and the law of our conduct.

¶ When Horace Bushnell was in college he lost his belief in God as God is usually understood. All that remained to him from his previous conviction was a belief in the abstract principle of right. That was not much of a God, but it was something, and that something he held to. Instead of entangling himself in the intricacies of the darkened realm of mystery in which he could so easily have become enslaved and submerged, and thus letting his splendid career of Christian faith and service be sacrificed, he simply held his ground inside the very small area of assurance remaining to him. Instead of dissipating his religious energies by roaming aimlessly in a world where nothing offered to him a basis of firm support, he kept simply and unswervingly to his confidence in the abstract principle of right, and not simply kept to it, but knelt down and prayed to it. 'A dreary prayer,' he said it was, but it was a prayer; it was the best he could do, and it was honest, and, as he afterwards told the students at Yale, the God that he had lost came back to him in his act of trying faithfully and sincerely to worship the small fraction of God that had survived to him.[1]

2. From the man who contemplated the smallness of faith through eyes clouded with misgiving, we turn to Jesus, who also, regarding faith at its smallest measure, saw in it an immense promise and potency. The saying is an example of our Lord's use of daring hyperbole. The least of all seeds grows into a tree so great that the birds build in its branches—a

[1] C. H. Parkhurst.

quite incredible thing for a mustard seed to do; but this is not a lesson in botany but a symbol of the Kingdom, and the marvellousness of its huge growth out of so little is the very point of it. Between the seed and the tree there is absolute continuity, and one has become the other by the law of its own life.

Faith may be a little thing, meagre and embryonic, but if it be alive at all it cannot stay where it is. It has more significance and potency in it than a whole mountain of negation. The smallest vital belief compels men to add to it everything that is kindred and cognate to its own quality. It is our Lord's appreciation of faith as an energy, of faith as an activity of the soul, which accounts for and justifies His forceful metaphor. 'Faith is the response of the organism which we name the soul to that environment which we call God.' It is more than a spirit of simple receptiveness. It is the primary motion of the human spirit when brought into contact with Divine truth and goodness. It was not the least contribution of St Paul that, as Dean Inge has pointed out, he made a fight 'for the new content of the word Faith as a Christian virtue,' and the fight was for its new *active* meaning as a decisive act of moral trust, and for it as an energy, bound up as it is with other Christian virtues, and especially with Love. It is an energy which insists on 'possessing its possessions.' In the strength of one achievement it moves on to face the next challenge.

(1) There is a man of strong individuality and force of mind who feels that a whole mountain would have to be moved and cast into the deep before he could be brought to believe in God at all. He says this thing out of his own habit of thinking for himself, standing upon his own feet, living his own life. He has faith in himself. He believes in intelligence, in will and freedom, and these are the things that make personality. Let him hold to that. He will have to go further. Believing this, he must believe more. Is it possible that the Source of all things has given us something loftier than is in the Source? 'There are many errors,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'but there is one truth in anthropomorphism, whatever worthy attribute belongs to man, be it personality or any other, its existence in the universe is thereby admitted; we can deny it no more.'

(2) There is another man who toward God presents a mind of blank negation. But he is greatly alive to the wonder of the world; he seeks and finds deep satisfaction in the majesty, beauty, and wonder of Nature's processes and results. But this man may not stand where he is. These emotions are the answer of personality to the touch and charm of some external cause, and he owns them real and enriching. This is a faith.

¶ Campanella, the monk of Calabria, near three centuries ago, uttered in rhyme the real challenge to this potential believer:

Deem you that only you have thought and sense,
While heaven and all its wonder, sun, and earth,
Scorned in your dullness, lack intelligence?
Fool! What produced you? These things gave you birth;
So have they mind and God.

(3) There is another man whose halt in faith is at a wholly different point. It is at Christ, as the final revelation of God, and as in unique relation to both man and God, that he has stumbled. But if the meaning of Christ, in that full range which the Christian creed and devotion express, is to him still impossible, is all his mind a negation concerning Christ? There are some things about Christ he is able to assent to gladly. Let him hold to these. Christ lived a life of perfect goodness; believe, then, in that goodness. He lived and died in perfect love; believe, then, in that love. Let him stand to these things.

(4) There is yet another man whose faith is only a smoulder amid a conscious moral confusion. Yet the doctrines and facts—if they be facts—of pardon, reconciliation, atonement, redemption, are beyond him. Let him face up to his own self-accusations and inquire the meaning and implications of these. He has a belief, or these would not rise disturbingly within him. He believes in the moral imperative. Let him explore the significance of it. He will go further. It is a real beginning when our moral helplessness is faced fairly. Redemption is not to be treated as an intellectual puzzle. It was not a problem, but a Person, who gave Himself for us on the Cross. The sense of sin and the experience of redemption are two things which God hath joined together and none can put asunder.

By its insistent self-enlargement let us test

our faith. If it is a faith which will not let us grow, or that limits and narrows us, we must get rid of it. A vital faith has no finality because its object has no limit. Jesus never said, 'There is no more to believe.' He said, 'I will send you another Paraclete. He will guide you into all truth.'

¶ The Saviour has been growing upon me. He has been the same, but I have been catching further glimpses of the wideness of the redemption He brings. I have known Him as Saviour these years, but I did not know how big a Saviour He was to become. Max Müller was right when he said that you do not know the worth of your Christian faith until you have compared it with others, and, one may add, until you have subjected it to life. The wonder of it dawns upon me. The deeper the scrutiny I have subjected it to, the more I have put it under the test of life, the more it has shone.[1]

The Energy of Prayer

Mark ix. 29.—'And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer.'

Most men find themselves at different times in two sharply contrasted moods towards prayer. In one mood prayer is our easy, inevitable, and most natural speech. When a man is walking with God it is his irresistible impulse to speak with Him. Or when we are in the depths of sorrow or of shame, prayer is our almost involuntary cry.

But in the other mood prayer becomes a mystery and an effort. The difficulties seem so dark and insuperable that our very breath is caught when we attempt to pray. So many petitions seem to remain unanswered. The reign of law in the universe seems so absolute that the mind cannot reach any certainty that an answer to prayer is even a possibility. The most deadening and disheartening barrier lies in the moral difficulty. Why should a man require to pray to a loving and merciful God? A man that is a father does not wait till the child who is lying on a bed of pain cries out for his sympathy and his healing. Why should prayer on the part of man be the indispensable condition of the working of God? Is prayer an energy for God?

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 107.

1. *Prayer makes us more deeply conscious of God.*—In the rush and stress of life, and never more than in these days when the song of speed is on every man's tongue, we tend to lose a sure and clear consciousness of God. It is not that men disbelieve in God. Never was faith in God and a submission to the authority of Christ so unquestioning as to-day. But in this busy and engrossing world, when the mind is filled every morning with all the news of the ends of the earth, and the interest of the heart is held, as the eyes are held by a drama on the stage, God falls out of men's thoughts. If men will not sometimes think of God, He will become merely a name to them. It is in prayer that we have the sure consciousness of God. Even although a man may kneel with a haze over his mind and a chill upon his spirit, he will not kneel in vain. Sailors have called out of the mist and fog as their vessel has approached some hidden shore. They did not know how far off the cliffs were which were marked upon their chart. Still they called, and as the responding 'hail' came back, they knew that eyes were watching and hearts were beating for them. In the same way men become sure of God when they pray to Him.

¶ If any of you have given up prayer, and have come to church to-day for the first time perhaps for many years, and long ago gave up your Communion (even supposing you ever came to Communion); if you never kneel down and say a prayer at home, I ask you, brother, in all love, can you wonder that the face of God has gone farther and farther from you, and that Jesus Christ has become a far-off figure in the distance? and that the Holy Spirit who is so strong to help you, to heal you, to cleanse you, and guide you in life, has less and less power over you every year?[1]

2. *Prayer brings us into sympathy with the mind of God.*—It is a sad commonplace that there are evils unnoticed, wrongs unremedied, poor unpitied and unhelped, miserable uncomforted, not because men do not know, but because they do not sympathize. Their eyes look out daily on scenes of poverty and of pain. Their ears are filled with the cries of those who suffer. But they do not seem to see or to hear, because their hearts have not been touched to sympathy.

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *A Mission of the Spirit*, 152.

¶ Travellers in Africa all dwell on the callous way in which a band of bearers look upon one of their number who is carrying his load in utter exhaustion. They will leave him behind them on the trail, well aware that next day his bones will be bleaching in the sun. They will obey any command to care for him with a sulky discontent. They will meet the order to carry him almost with rebellion.

All the great leaders in the philanthropies and redemptions have been men of prayer. As they have continued in prayer they have come to learn the mind of Christ. They have begun to think His thoughts. They have become one with Him in spirit. He has lived and breathed within them. As the tide of sympathy with the mind of God has risen in their soul while they prayed, they were endued with the power of God.

¶ 'For sixty years,' says his principal biographer, 'Lord Shaftesbury was the champion in every battle on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, the friend and helper of all who were afflicted in mind, body, or estate, and especially the leader in every movement having relation to the claims and interests of the labouring classes.' To make himself acquainted with their needs, with the injustice and the wrongs from which they suffered, he went into their midst as a man and a brother. For years, when Parliament rose at midnight and other members went home, he used to go out into the streets 'to seek and to save those who were lost.' He visited the lunatic asylums, and saw for himself some of their horrors. 'In factories,' he declared, 'I examined the mills, the machinery, the homes, and saw the workers and their work, in all its details. In collieries, I went down into the pits. In London, I went into lodging-houses and thieves' haunts and every filthy place. It gave me a power I could not otherwise have had.' Yes! and that power was intensified by the fact that the knowledge thus acquired was accompanied by a corresponding *sympathy*. Once, at least—and it is typical of what he always felt—in a shelter for very poor children, he sat at the table, his head on his hands and the tears falling fast, because the spectacle of these starving little ones was too much for his sensitive spirit.

Lord Shaftesbury was so great a reformer because he was so great a Christian. No other power but Christ's could have produced such a life as his, such a record of self-denying, persistent service for the sake of the poor and needy. Whence came his inspiration and courage and strength for service? We cannot read this man's life, we cannot look into the portions of his diaries which have been disclosed to us, without feeling that he was from the beginning, and continuously all the way through, a man of prayer.[1]

3. *Prayer surrenders us to the energy of God.*—The highest attitude in prayer is not desire, or aspiration, or praise. It is surrender. In surrender we open our whole being to God as a flower opens itself to the sun, and we are filled up to our measure with His Divine energy.

There is a strange deep saying of the Old Testament, in which a psalmist charges the Hebrew people with limiting the Holy One of Israel. We limit God when we think meanly of Him and teach men an impoverished doctrine of His grace. We limit God when we will not keep His commandments and do His will. We limit God by every act of rebellion which blocks His way. But there is one way in which we limit God most effectually of all. That way is by our prayerlessness. Because we are not surrendered to God in prayer, the might of His energy does not pass into us. Every faculty a man has, every talent God has given him, every fibre of his heart, and every cell in his brain, may be energized by the energy of God. 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' Men whom others have despised, teachers whom the strong have scorned, humble and lowly and unlearned men and women have done great things for God, because they have been so surrendered to Him that His energy has been a swift dynamic in every faculty of body and of soul.

¶ For over twelve years John Wesley served in the ministry without power and without joy. But he came to that day when in prayer he surrendered himself, and he was filled with the energy of God. His life thereafter was a daily yielding of himself to God. His Journal, on almost every page, records his constant and daily touch with his Almighty Lover.

4. *Prayer works on the will of God.*—No error has done more to paralyse our faith in prayer and to make the prayer of faith a wistful

[1] Josiah Flew, *Saints of Yesterday*, 46.

observance than the strange conception that God is fixed and inexorable law. But God is not law. God is will.

¶ Can the humble request of believing lips restrain, accelerate, change the settled order of events? Can prayer make things that are not to be as though they were? Are events, in short, brought about through prayer that would not otherwise take place? Yes, a thousand times yes! To believe anything short of this is to take the soul out of every text that refers to prayer, is to do away with the force of every scriptural illustration that bears upon it—to believe anything short of this is to believe that God has placed a mighty engine in the hands of His creature, but one that will not work, useful only as a scientific toy might be that helps to bring out a child's faculties, valuable only as a means of training the soul to commune with God. Yet what so easy for the unbeliever as to cavil at prayer; what so easy even for the Christian as to fail and falter in this region, and to stop short of the fullness of this, God's own Land of Promise, through unbelief? The commonplace objection to prayer, founded upon the supposed immutability of the laws by which God governs the world, is easily met and answered by the fact that prayer is itself one of these laws, upon whose working God has determined that a certain result shall follow:

> An element
> That comes and goes unseen, yet doth effect
> Rare issues by its operance.[1]

The conception that lies behind much of the seemingly wise writing of many clever men is that God has no other laws than those we know, and no higher methods than those we use. But God is a sovereign will with infinite resources. God's will as an eternal purpose in Christ cannot be finally thwarted.

And yet God's will, as Jesus tells us in the prayer He taught us to pray, is not always done. A man can resist His Holy Ghost. As a man can thwart and check the will of God, so also can he move that will and work on it to his blessing and his help. The issue is often seen in what men call miracles. But there are no miracles with God. Yet the answers to a human prayer are signs and wonders which seem to interrupt the course of Nature, to divide the seas in their beds, and to keep the sun from going down.

[1] Dora Greenwell, *Essays*, 135.

The Cause of our Ineffectiveness

Mark ix. 29.—'This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer' (R.V.).

Raphael has been so struck with the connection between the stories of the Transfiguration and of the epileptic boy that he has crowded the two scenes on the same canvas. The lesson which this connection seems to impress upon most people is that Peter's desire to remain for ever in raptures on the Mount needs to be touched with a consideration of the needs of humanity groaning in the valley below. The explanation given afterwards by Jesus to the distressed disciples who inquired the cause of their failure to heal the epileptic points not so much to the need for coming down from the Mount as to the need for first having gone up. Jesus traces His success in contrast to their failure to the power of prayer. This is certainly the lesson we need to remember at the present time. It is only transfigured souls that are going to reform life; and it is this that we have forgotten.

1. *Our impotence has driven us almost to despair.*—We have to admit the apparent inefficiency of our Christianity. It has failed to relieve humanity of its pains and evils. Religion is, to-day, ruthlessly judged by its practical effects, and, although sometimes the accusations made against it are unreasonable, we shall be very unwise if we refuse to consider them because they are violently expressed and distressing to listen to. For they might be much more unreasonable than they are. Men might take the New Testament as their standard and inquire where are the powers once possessed by Christians to heal diseases and to cast out devils; where is the promise of Christ's return, and where is that Church which was depicted like a city coming down out of heaven, whose light was to gather in all the nations and the leaves of whose trees were for their healing. But few people ask so much as that. They have learned to take their New Testament symbolically; they do not clamour for miracles, nor do they ask for supernatural occurrences. But they ask for demonstrations of the practical power of Christianity. They want to know why it has not

changed the social order. They know that the social order in which we are content to live is not based on the principles of the gospel, nor does it follow the teaching of Christ. Alongside such things as the abolition of gladiatorial shows, of chattel slavery, the gaining of political freedom, the growth of education, the invention of machinery, the piling up of vast riches, there has been growing up a new economic and intellectual slavery which has cheated us of the gains that progress might have brought.

¶ This is the first great claim that we make upon the Church to-day: that it should make a tremendous act of penitence for having failed so long and on so wide a scale to behave as the champion of the oppressed and the weak; for having tolerated what it ought not to have tolerated; for having so often been on the wrong side. And the penitence must lead to reparation while there is yet time, ere the well-merited judgments of God take all weapons of social influence out of our hands.[1]

Especially, people are asking why Christianity has not made an end of war. They feel it has so terribly failed to do this that they expect nothing from it afterwards in this or in any other direction. It is clear to them that the teaching of Christ not only condemns war, but sets out principles of life that would make war impossible. Meanwhile, the nations have been organizing themselves on lines which are repudiated by the Christian religion—national pride, hatred of foreigners, the securing of territorial possessions, boasting in their power, relying upon force as their defence and their influence. It may be allowed that, as with social evils, Christianity has deplored war, has tried to alleviate it somewhat, has traced it to sin; but it has never clearly pointed out its underlying causes, or set about inspiring the nations to make an end of war by setting before themselves totally different ideals.

It would be possible to find considerable reasons why Christianity should not be blamed for the unequal social order and the persistence of war. If we had not built the new Jerusalem, we were at least shaping the stones out of which it could be built. If Christianity had not solved the problem of nationality, it was producing people who were of a type which would make for the higher internationalism.

It is difficult to weigh facts when they are of such complexity and range; but we could not expect a very wide public to be impressed with an apologetic of Christianity which rested everything upon the superior type of personality we are now producing. It could be questioned whether striking conversion is a common occurrence to-day, and whether strength of character, depth of personality, or attraction of disposition are outstanding marks which we can still confidently appeal to as distinctive of the adherents of the Christian faith. Would a collection of Christian people strike a critical observer as people who were in possession of an eternal secret? It may not count for much, but it tends in the same direction, that the Roman Church does not get many applications for contemporary canonization these days.

The best of us would confess it about ourselves. We feel how ineffectual we are. When we read mystical works, or the biographies of the saints, and most of all when we read the New Testament, we are depressed beyond measure. We feel not only that there is a secret we have not found, but somehow there is a secret we have lost. The glory and the grandeur seem to have departed from our faith. It is not that we are sighing for some gifts and graces which can be granted only to the few; it is not that we are misled by the idealisms and the idealizations of the past into thinking that our own age is poor in comparison. It is that we have come into an age of awful need, and that we feel we have little to contribute.

So far as we can diagnose our own case we feel that this impotence is due to a divided nature. If our intellect is wholly convinced, then our emotions are cold; if we feel deeply, we are unable to give reasons for the faith that is in us; and if both mind and heart are sure, then there remains a paralysed and coward will.

Above all, we feel our inevadable complicity in a life which our consciences cannot approve. We know the impotence is in ourselves, and not in Christ. Never were we so certain of the supremacy of Christ, or of His being the only Saviour of the world. We rejoice to know that the whole intellectual movement of our times is on our side; that the materialistic theory has broken down, that mere idealism has confessed its bankruptcy, and that modern thought tends to move towards religion as its goal. The recognition that we mortals have to start with what is given us demands a revelation; the insistence

[1] Charles Gore.

upon personality as the one dominant reality has disengaged the idea of God from those mists that seemed its only appropriate wrapping, and demands an individual Incarnation. And the whole social movement, the insistence upon the individual's debt to his social heredity, the feeling after fellowship, only show that the Church is a necessity. Everything is on our side.

The lessons of the war are plain enough to our eyes. Slowly it is stealing into people's minds that it is about time that Christianity was tried. But these instincts and vague surmisings want an expression and a clear lead. And it is there that we fail. We are conscious that the word will not come to our lips, even when it is in our hearts. It is pathetic to see everyone who has any vision trying to show it to others and to note that they seem afflicted with a kind of aphasia.

¶ A writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* tells of a dream he had in which a friend, well known to the world, was standing on a knoll with a crowd around the base of it. He was addressing the crowd and his lips were trying to frame a word. But though he tried to utter it he could not. The crowd knew the word and they tried to help him speak it, but they, too, could not. The word that they were all trying to say was 'God.' They who can speak that word 'God' from experience hold the future. The Church must say it or perish.[1]

2. *The remedy recommended for our impotence is prayer.*—This is accompanied by an illustration of what is meant by prayer. It is prayer which ends in transfiguration. Jesus had climbed the mountain in order to pray; He had deliberately sought the solitude of the hilltop; and this shows a determinate preparation for prayer, a purpose realized, and a willingness to enter upon an arduous exercise. This was not simply in order to experience some spiritual exaltation, not even for the quite legitimate end of soul refreshment. Jesus was compelled to seek illumination on the crisis which was now facing Him, to find strength for the impending trial. He climbed Hermon in order to see Calvary in its true perspective. He could not endure unless He saw the invisible and was armoured with spiritual power. It was while He was praying that His face was seen to change, and a radiance of unearthly light gradually suffused both His form and His garments. Christ came down from the Mount seriously warning His disciples of the fate in store for Him, bearing the marks of His great experience upon His face in such a way that the multitude could recognize it, and—which is the important point for us to note—endued with a power that the most stubborn case was unable to resist.

If we are going to help our world we must seek a transfiguring experience. The evils which obsess humanity are not going to be easily exorcised. If anyone is to find a new way for the world to-day, it will be in walking that way himself, and not simply in guessing what it may be, and in urging others to find it. It may involve, as it involved for Jesus, going on alone, and at length having to face the Cross. The Mount must be climbed in order to gain strength to climb another mount; and on the way to that, devils may be cast out. It may be that no one will be accepted as a teacher of the new way who has not made some effort to separate himself from complicity in the ways of life which have led civilization astray. A generation ago it was understood by most Christians that there were certain worldly ways of life in which it was unseemly to engage. They consisted in the main of certain rather gay and dangerous pleasures. This distinction has now been abandoned as Puritanical, and the healthy Christian no longer regards the theatre or the ballroom with horror, or looks upon playing cards or reading novels as an invention of the devil. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone that what was wrong with the Puritan instinct was that it did not go deep enough. Is there no call still for Christians to abstain from certain paths which seem to lead to frivolity, to sexual licence, and to degradation?

We are called to explore this great secret of transforming prayer. There is the stage of *preparation*, in which the soul knows and asks for the boon it seeks, and this with complete surrender to the will of God as well as some understanding of the cost involved. There follows on this a brooding exercise known as *meditation*, in which the reality of God or the truth of religion is impressed upon the mind by every method of imagination and concentration, until all one's psychical life is stirred to the depths and is made ready for some great fire to fuse the whole nature into one. There follows this the experience known as *contemplation*, in

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 134.

which the facts of religion take hold of the soul and completely change it, endowing the mind with illumination, the heart with feeling so strong as to blot out all fears, and the will with such power that the highest aspirations are now made possibilities. It is a process dark in many of its steps, one which sorts out all unworthy aspirants by its difficulties and dangers, the effects of which are, however, unmistakable. They are a simplification of the entire nature, an iron purpose to carry through what has been revealed as necessary, and certain psychical characteristics which invest the subject with radiance and are able to cast something like a spell over others.

The intensity which will drive the spirit towards these high reaches of spiritual experience is a vivid realization of the evils and the needs of the world. Solitude is sought, not in order to escape the world, but in order that one may see how to aid it. No one must climb this mount for himself, but only for God and humanity. Indeed, there is often a sense in which one climbs it for God alone, because any thought of the effect to be produced on others tends to shut the mind against the revelation of what may be an entirely new way. It is when one seeks God simply for Himself that one is likely to convey the most permanent benefit to humanity struggling in the valley below. For nothing is to be accomplished without both radiance and power—radiance to win and power to release; and the light and power of God cannot shine through until there has taken place a great forgetfulness of self, which can be accomplished only as the soul is taken up into its Creator and made the channel of His revelation and the agent of His will. To climb the steep mountain of prayer is the one thing to do; it is the only worthy ambition; it is the only way to answer the appalling need of the world.

¶ In the *Sutta Nipata*, one of the sacred books of the Buddhists, this advice is given: 'Make thyself an island'—that is, renounce self, for self-renunciation is the central thought of Buddhism. The advice was given four hundred years before Christ. It is good for us to-day. Make yourself an island, in which your soiled thoughts may become once more pure and white, in which your soul may regain the strength it has lost by contact with the world. Make yourself an island—not a permanent abode in which to devote yourself to a monastic life of meditation and privation and penance, but a place into which you may retire to get recharged with spiritual power. Make yourself an island, and then from your island you will come forth and touch the world again without being soiled, and you will impress men with a new and living power.[1]

Afraid to Ask

Mark ix. 32.—'They were afraid to ask him.'

1. When we read that the disciples were afraid to ask our Lord of something that mystified them in what He had declared, we are at once surprised. For we remember how accessible He was at all times. We remember how ready was Christ's help in regard to their perplexities of mind, or their difficulties of service. And yet these men, who had heard what He foretold as coming upon Him, and upon them in union with Him, were afraid to ask Him what it all meant! Whenever they had asked Him concerning things not understood His answers went to the very root of them. His answers opened worlds to them, in which they found themselves lost. They completely revised the scales of value by which they had been accustomed to estimate themselves and others. He had never failed to enlighten their understanding, or to shed light upon their path. They were afraid to ask Him now not because of anything forbidding in His personality, or because of any possible hesitancy in His response. They were afraid to ask not because they did not apprehend His meaning, but because they apprehended it only too well. And they did not want to be brought face to face with the Cross that lay ahead of Him and the issues it opened up for them. They understood enough of Christ's meaning to know that their hopes of an earthly kingdom were doomed. They had been disputing as to who should be the greatest, and as to their relative offices in a kingdom which they now knew was never going to be established. That is why they were afraid to ask Him. There is something very natural about their hesitant fear. We all feel that while there is uncertainty in any matter there is hope. How many people dread seeing a doctor,

[1] D. B. Knox.

and put it off and off, afraid of an unwelcome truth.

¶ 'I know a man,' says Dr Stuart Holden, 'whose son is dishonouring his name by carrying on a course of life which is unworthy, who said to me the other day, "I won't ask him about it; I prefer to be in uncertainty." Why? That man knows that if he faces his son with authority and responsibility, there will be scandal. And he is afraid to ask.'

We cannot recall the fear of these His earliest followers without being impressed by the contrast between Christ's attitude toward unexplained things and theirs. That to which they were moving in common—the Cross—meant infinitely more to Him than it could ever do to them. There were unsolved problems challenging the soul of Jesus. But even in the last dark hour He was not afraid to challenge heaven concerning them—'My God, why——?' The calm courage and the long view were Christ's. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured. He never lost the sense of Divine design because of the pressure of unkindly detail. He never lost the supporting assurance of God's almightiness and goodness because things seemed to be working for frustration of the great purpose of the world's blessing. And so He was never afraid to ask concerning the things which menaced. The contrast between Christ and His disciples, of that day as well as of this, sets Him immeasurably above us in this as in all things, and is part of our confidence that He is able to save us from any debilitating and paralysing fear which may come upon us.

2. In spite of all they knew of Him the disciples 'were afraid to ask him.' Is this so with us? Are we afraid of what it may mean to bring life to Christ, seeking His verdict upon the things about which we are already uncertain? Are we afraid it will mean an entire reconstruction; that some things will have to go, and that their removal will be painful? Conscience has not been silent in all the days of their toleration, and we are inwardly convinced that they will have to be renounced. It is our knowledge of what He will say that makes us afraid to ask Him! There is a moral momentum which is carrying us much farther and faster from holiness than we ever intended to go, on which an iron brake will have to be put. Or, there are some relationships with men which will have to be adjusted and others which will have to be forsaken. We shall have to recognize the rights of others which hitherto we have denied or evaded. We may have to get as low in humility before men as we seek, in our best hours, to be before Him. We shall have to cleanse the home or the business. We shall have to cleanse our methods of carrying on even the work of God if we ask Him the reason—which we already suspect—of the virtual failure of our efforts. And if we ask Him with sincerity of purpose, if we ask Him with a determination that life shall be harmonized in its every interest with His Word, it may mean that we shall be involved in conflict, that we shall lose a certain amount of popularity which is ours only because of our ready compliance with what is not altogether His Will. If we are really going to bring our lives to Christ, it will mean that we may have to stand with Him in an unfavourable worldly position, and to stand alone as far as human fellowship goes.

¶ Mr Chesterton says of the teaching of Christ about life, that 'it has not been tried and found untrue; it has been found difficult, and not tried!'

¶ In *Brand* Ibsen represents a young clergyman who mourns the loss of the heroic in his day and generation. He sees in his contemporaries a squalid race that shrinks from every sacrifice and hides itself in insincerities begotten by self-inflicted feebleness. He finds them striving to be all things to all men, to be a little of everything but everything in nothing—a little religion for use on Sundays, a little patriotism for national anniversaries, a little hilarity to mix in the world with, a little perception of everything that demands greatness of perception.

Their very religion is in keeping with all this. They repeat the Lord's Prayer, but there is not a line of it that is winged with will, and has in it such depth and consistence of demand as will launch it heavenward, not one except the petition 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Wrenched from its context, this is the storm-tossed spar which tells of the wreck of faith. Yet even this indicates that they are not wholly material, only falsely true. They still haggle for a little spiritual consolation, a little idealism, a little spiritual exaltation, but they have not the manhood to leap into the arena crying 'All or nothing.'[1]

[1] J. Burns.

3. Such certainty as to His meaning and His requirements as His first disciples had, and as we have, sets up a new issue. So long as we are uncertain we can silence conscience about anything. So long as we are in doubt the same degree of moral guilt does not attach to us as there assuredly does when we know the Lord's Will and refuse to do it. But when we do not want the trouble to be settled; when we are afraid to ask Him, lest the way He points out be contrary to the way to which our hearts incline, then we court disaster. For judicial blindness is still the penalty of open-eyed disobedience. Men who know the Will of God and persist in ignoring or defying it ultimately lose the power of discerning it. And, walking in darkness, they simply compass their own destruction. Be certain of this, that along any other way of life than that of His loving requirement there lies nothing but danger, nothing but loss of influence and power, nothing but ultimate shipwreck and apostasy.

¶ Herod could not get a word out of Christ when he 'asked him many questions' because for years he had not cared to hear His voice. And *conscience*, like the Lord of conscience, will hold its peace after men have neglected its speech. You can pull the clapper out of the bell upon the rock, and then, though the waves may dash, there will not be a sound, and the vessel will drive straight on to the black teeth that are waiting for it.[1]

In the case of those early disciples of Christ the very thing about which they were afraid to ask Him was that thing which brought them ultimately the greatest blessing of all! They were afraid to ask about what was the crowning proof of His love. They were afraid to ask the interpretation of that which opened Heaven to all believers. They were afraid to ask about that which, although it brought an end to their hopes of an earthly kingdom, gave substance and realization to their largest conceptions of the promises of God.

So, too, it is with us. The thing we most fear is that which will bring to us blessing beyond all imagining, fullness of life which we have long been seeking in a vague kind of way, and power for service we have so long coveted. All the spiritual enduements and equipments we have desired will be realized only as our lives are brought to Him for His revision. The thing we fear most, in this respect, is the thing that will bring us all that we have sought in vain. For we ask and ask in vain, not of an unwilling God, but of One who cannot morally bless His people until they are in a moral condition to receive His blessing.

[1] Alexander Maclaren.

Greatness in Christ's Kingdom

Mark ix. 36.—'And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'

To discuss in the abstract the question, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? is a profitable employment. Wherever men of any earnestness meet, such questions as these will turn up: What constitutes human perfection? Is the highest position in the eternal world assigned to him who has been most conspicuous here, or on what principle does promotion there proceed? But when these questions are discussed with a personal reference, and in view of present competing claims, there must inevitably be jealousies and rivalries, vanity and hatred. The heat, the bitterness, the acrimony which the disciples exhibited disclosed to our Lord the temper that would again and again be manifested in His Church by those who seek place and power, by those whose ambition for themselves is greater than their love for the common cause.

¶ 'What good work is there,' asks Bishop Gore, 'which is not in more or less continual danger of suffering or even of being abandoned, because fellow-Christians, zealous fellow-Christians, will plainly, and it must be said wilfully, yield to the ambition to be first; will not be content to be second or third; will not do unobtrusive work; will think how can I shine? rather than how can I serve?'

That His rebuke might effectually lodge in their minds and be audible to all generations, our Lord gave it dramatically. He took a child, one of Peter's children presumably, and set him in the midst so that every eye of the group was turned on him. It will save a great deal of explaining, He seems to say, if you will take it like this. See this little child; try to understand something of its temper and spirit and disposition. See what is childlike, and know that this is what I would bring you to, what you must come to. This is nearest the Kingdom.

One almost pities the poor disciples, so

suddenly and completely dropped from all their vain notions. They look at the child held up as the type of Christ's subjects, and they are seized with a sense of utter helplessness. For what do they see in the child? Not great attainment which by much striving they might hope to win; not a marvellous purity which stern self-control might achieve; not a consecration of life to God which the example of their Master and His rewards might help them to; not ability to deal with high subjects and be of great service—none of these things; but an absolute unconsciousness of any ability, of any merit, of any serviceable excellence, of any claim to high place or hope of great reward. It was, in short, true humility they saw; a humility that did not know itself to be humility, and was thereby humble. For to be conscious of our humility is so far to cease to be humble.

It is so frail, so delicate a thing,
'Tis gone if it but look upon itself;
And he who ventures to esteem it his,
Proves by that single thought he has it not.

1. What delights us in children is very much their inability to conceal their thoughts, their artless love, their general simplicity. They have not yet an evil conscience, and they are unaware of anything within them which may not be freely uttered; they are unaware of it because as yet it is not there. It is this unconscious innocent frankness that refreshes us in children; it blows like a fresh breeze from their presence across our spirits, and sweeps away the close atmosphere of social restraints and guilty remembrances and evil thoughts.

¶ It was said of Chalmers: 'In simplicity he was a child. By simplicity we do not mean the simplicity of the head; of that he had none; but we refer to a certain quality of heart and life which gives directness to all actions, a beautiful unconsciousness of self—an outgoing of the whole nature that we see in children.'

2. Another characteristic of childhood is its ready belief in everything it is told. As we grow older we clothe ourselves in scepticism and guard ourselves against deception, till, as the climax of wisdom and safety, we believe nothing, and are thus, like the heavy-mailed knights of old, stifled in our own armour. We count it beneath us to be astonished, childish to be found lost in reverence and wonder, and gradually train our spirits to believe in nothing but the most obvious, commonplace, physical things, which by their very nature are destined to decay. Surely we would do well to pray God that in this respect our youth may be renewed and that He would revive within us the feeling that we have but begun to live, to know, and to feel that there lies before us an endless and infinitely stimulating experience. Well may we pray for power to be in earnest, to treat what we hear of as real, to wonder in simplicity, and to worship; that God would dip us in the waters of His own regeneration, that so the hard crust in which this world encases us may drop from us, and our flesh become fresh and soft as a child's again.

¶ It has been pointed out how George Eliot makes her characters steadily to deteriorate with the years. Their idealism dies; dewy sweetness evaporates; with the whitening of the hair comes the bleaching of the spirit; the soul, instead of ripening, only wizens, and life is 'dropping buckets into empty wells and growing old in drawing nothing up.'[1]

¶ Putting aside the question whether, as Wordsworth says in his great ode,

trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home,

it will be familiar to anyone who has a sympathetic appreciative sense that the child's outlook on the world around him is very different from our own. It has in him a more intense emotional reaction. He sees it with a freshness and wonder unfelt by us, because our sensibility is blunted and less vivid. And for the same reason that we can trust our faculties in their prime rather than in their degeneration, so the fresh and clear emotional response of a child's nature represents more *truthful* appreciation than our own. Our sensibility is blunted, not only by use and habit, but also by the hardening and coarsening experiences of our lives; and also again by the development of intellect, which grows largely at the expense of the emotions. We lose the transparent soul of the child, his simple faith and trusting nature. To anyone who cannot *feel* the difference between the child's outlook and his own, this will convey no meaning—and words cannot assist him. It is as if one tried to describe love to a person who has

[1] J. Hall, *Workaday Ethics*, 99.

never loved, or a religious experience to one who has never had such an experience; indeed, in both love and religious experience there is the same childlike attitude of pure emotion—and hence Christ's comparison of His true followers to 'little children.' Poetry, music, love of nature, and the highest art produce in us at times the same indefinable feeling and give us back for evanescent periods the fresh, clear, emotional sensibility of a child.[1]

3. Coming still closer to the quality our Lord wished to imprint on the minds of His disciples, we recognize in the child that readiness to receive instruction, information, gifts, which arises from humility. Grown-up people receive a gift in one way, children in quite another way. The child's nature is to accept all that is offered, and even to ask and to claim in the most exorbitant manner. He really understands, or at least acts upon, the true order of things much better than we do. His instinct is better than our reflection. He believes with Paul that the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children; whereas we must ever be trying to provide for God, to give Him what will satisfy Him, if possible even to pension Him off; we cannot ever learn to let Him provide for us and give all to us. But God sells nothing, only gives; and he who will not take the Kingdom of God as a little child freely and without considering how much he deserves cannot take it at all.

4. But it is not the innocent simplicity and frankness of the child, nor yet his openness of mind to accept instruction, nor even his humble readiness to receive all he wants, that makes him our model; it is his unconsciousness that he has anything to commend him. 'We,' says our Lord, 'must think as little of our own attainments as that child who has none to think of; we must rest as little upon anything we have done, or think ourselves capable of doing, as the child who has done nothing and knows nothing he is capable of doing.' Moral greatness consists in ability to do without acknowledgment and rewards; greatness in Christ's Kingdom—that is, true spiritual greatness, the only greatness that is a man's own, and inseparable from his person—consists in that loving regard for other people's welfare which has no thought to spare for its own reward and advantage.

[1] J. T. Huckett.

The production of this humility is an unvariable and essential accompaniment of conversion. It is involved in the very nature of conversion. Conversion is a turning completely round; it is the alteration of all that is most influential upon character and conduct—of our views, of our principles, of our aims in life. The converted man makes a fresh start, and he does so in the humbling conviction that his old course and his old character were radically wrong. And if within the Kingdom, do we, then, beside this little child seem small or great? Measured by the standards we set for one another, we may perhaps be satisfied with our attainment, but it is well to look steadily at this standard set before us by our Lord Himself, and to measure ourselves by it.

To be simple-minded, to be natural, to be humble—this is our calling; to make ourselves of no reputation, to take everything as a gift—this is of the essence of Christianity. A loud, contentious, wrangling, self-obtrusive spirit feels no sympathy with Christ; the temper that condemns other men, and implies that its way is the only way, is not the temper of the little child. If we would follow Christ we must not strive, nor cry, nor let our voice be heard in the streets; we must learn to be emptied of self and seek what redounds, not to our praise or to our gain, but to the real good of men; we must learn to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We must go apart with Him who set the little child before His disciples, and we must keep saying to Him, 'Teach me also, O Lord, and lead me in thy way.'[1]

O that I, as a little child,
  May follow Thee, and never rest
Till sweetly Thou hast breathed Thy mild
  And lowly mind into my breast!
Nor ever may we parted be
Till I become one spirit with Thee.[2]

The Eternal Child

Mark ix. 36.—'And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'

At Christmas God once more sets His Eternal Child in the midst of the world. He repeats the wonder of the first Christmas, the wonder of that

[1] Marcus Dods, *Christ and Man*, 226.
[2] Paul Gerhardt.

hour when God saw that at last it was of use that Christ should come. The time had been long. The eager visions of the prophets, the unappeased yearning, the deep desires of the spirit were fulfilled when in the fullness of time Christ was born in Bethlehem. He came when hopes had grown craven, and longings in all hearts but a few were stilled. His tarrying had almost quenched the fire on the altar of Israel, but not quite. When He came from God into life there were not wanting those who gave Him welcome and looked into infinitude through the Child's eyes. And even now Christmas takes us back to almost abandoned and forgotten regions of the spirit. It is as if Christ were new born into the world.

What a reviving, sanctifying power comes to the homes and hearts of men with the coming of a child. It is the new centre of interest round which all thoughts are gathered. It lives, and we live with it, the unconscious and trustful life of love. No matter what disappointments we have passed through, the child wakes us from the slumber of the soul, from the lethargy of custom to old ideals and loves and worships and dreams. It is the cradle and the child, and all that is twined about that young sweet presence, that saves society from being scorched and withered, blighted by sheer selfishness. We may bless God when He sets the child in the midst. Many men and women have felt this—how much has come into their life with the coming of their first-born. The love of a child, the constant presence, the simple teaching, the clinging trust—there is nothing like it. Hearts are held, lives are influenced, men and women are conquered and subdued by the power of a little child.

¶ 'Blessed be Childhood,' said Amiel; 'it brings down something of heaven into the midst of our rough earthliness.'

Once a year a Divine Child is set in the midst of us. Incarnate God and yet a little child. One who grew up to a perfect man and to possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet never left behind, as we do, the things which make childhood attractive. One who was called by His disciples to the last 'Thy holy child Jesus.' Once a year this Child is set in the midst, and we gather round Him praying and rejoicing, and refresh our hearts with visions of childhood's purity and bliss.

(1) A child appeals to us specially because it so much needs us, and the Eternal Child, too, casts Himself upon us in love and in hope. Love waited on Him when He came. True, He was laid in a manger, but he was laid there tenderly. He was *trustful* as children are trustful, and there is nothing that softens the heart more than a child's faith. Most of us grow world-weary. The time comes when we expect danger at every step, when the grey sisters enter our house and threaten to abide, when our idols turn to clay, and our eagerly sought prizes drop dead from our grasp. But we are healed from the disease of hardness by a little child.

Now it is a true and salutary thought for Christmas that Christ needs us even as we need Him. It was love of us that brought Him here. It was to win us that the travail of His soul was passed through, and now, when the days of His flesh are over, now that He is ascended, we can look at Him in a new light. We remember what our earthly love was to Him, how when childhood was over He was left alone and desolate in a darkened world; how when He was yet young He suffered the pain which goes down to the very springs of life; how His heart was not light though His step was bold; how He was tempted and scourged and rent at last by evil. And the thought that we slew Him should act on our unbelief and hardness of heart like fire, till the foremost passion of life should be to make the great reparation and give ourselves to Him who gave Himself for us.

¶ Whenever the heart is most kindled it is by the thought of the well of God dug by the soldiers' spear, of the Cross, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails, of the red wine of love that flowed when He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him; of the sweet and dreadful cry, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'

He was slain, and we slew Him. We can never make it up. The thorns of the thorn-crowned head pierced the heart, the fever of His death wakes the fever of our passion, till all the loves that once strayed abroad gather to a burning centre, and the fountain of our affections has but one channel, and that is He.[1]

(2) The Eternal Child, like all children, came seeking for *love*. A child, it has been said, is ready to take all or any love. Its love is the old immeasurable love, a deep sea which no plummet has fathomed, a spring of inexhaustible

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

riches. Perhaps a child ceases to be a child when it knows that there are strangers. It has a heart for the world, but the world will not enter, and so at last the spring of love is sealed up. The eyes no longer sparkle, but grow serious and wearied. Greetings are given coldly and doubtfully, because there is a fear that they may not be returned. The love which Christ gives and asks is not the love of blazing passion; it is not the stormy ocean of earthly love; it is not the love that says, 'Will you be mine?' but far rather the love that says, 'I must be thine.' Give Christ that love and He manifests Himself unto us, manifests His unsearchable riches. But no man receives the manifestation unless he loves, and, indeed, if we think of it, love is always the condition of manifestation.

¶ An old philosopher says, 'I saw the fragments of a wrecked ship floating on the sea. Only a few pieces meet and hold together for a little while. Then comes a storm which drives them eastward and westward, and they never meet again. So it is with us here below. But no man has seen the great shipwreck.' This is the story of earthly loves and friendships, but there is a love that is from everlasting to everlasting.

¶ Blessed is the man who knows what it is to love Jesus: love Him and keep Him for your friend, and He will stand by you when all other friends depart and will not suffer you to perish at the last.[1]

(3) Once more, a child calls forth our tenderness, and there is a true sense in which the Eternal Child needs our *sympathy*. He has entered into His rest and ceased from His own works, as God did from His. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father Almighty; but He has not yet come into His own. Think of the forgetfulness, the rebellion which for nineteen hundred years He has silently witnessed from His throne. When we remember that He has committed His cause to us, that it is our loving ardour that must bring Him joy, life becomes earnest and solemn, and every hour is precious. We feel that we have been at the best playing with our opportunities, and we take up the charge afresh and labour that whether present or absent we may be well pleasing unto Him.

[1] Thomas à Kempis.

Tolerance

Mark ix. 40.—'For he that is not against us is on our part.'

In connection with this text we naturally think of the other and seemingly opposite saying of our Lord, 'He that is not for me is against me.' It is not hard to reconcile these two sayings of Christ if we attend to the context in which each was uttered. In the first case the disciples called upon their Master to rebuke one who was casting out devils in His name, and who, nevertheless, was not one of their number. In the other case our Lord was replying to the charge of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils—'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?' In the one case the man was doing to the best of his ability the very work in which Christ Himself was engaged. He was unauthorized (so far as it appears) by Christ Himself; he did not belong to the apostolic band. Yet he was, according to his lights, a follower of Jesus who believed in His powers, and enlisted himself in Christ's own task of fighting against the powers of evil, bringing bodily and spiritual health to suffering humanity, setting up the Kingdom of Heaven among men. Such a man, the Master said, was on His side. Our Lord does not, of course, commend or approve this aloofness and self-sufficiency of the man; but still he was not to be opposed, or denounced, or rebuked. Sympathy, help, instruction—of these things, it might be said, he stood in need. Rebuke would have done no good to the work in which both were engaged.

On the other occasion the Pharisees had been disparaging, opposing, ascribing to the powers of evil, work the goodness of which and the efficacy of which they could not deny—holding aloof from the whole spiritual movement which Christ was inaugurating, and that on the strength of a theological hypothesis suggested by pure malignity. In part our Lord's words may be regarded as a continuation of His former argument—'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; . . . If Satan casteth out Satan . . . how then shall his kingdom stand?' 'A man must be on one

side or the other,' we may suppose Him to say. If Satan were what he was commonly supposed to be, he could not be undoing what, from the medical point of view of the time, was his own work, promoting the good which it was his chief object to hinder. But there is also, no doubt, a reference to the objecting critics. In practical crises like these, a man must be on one side or the other. He that took no part in the warfare was really siding with the enemy, swelling the rising tide of suspicion and misunderstanding and antagonism which was soon to bring about the Master's death.

1. It was true of part of Christ's work that he who was not against Him was for Him. As a reformer, the introducer of a new order, from the great mass of people He did not expect more at first than that they should give Him a fair field and a fair trial. All who did not oppose Him really served His ends. They had enough sympathy with His objects and His teaching not rashly to counteract them; and our Lord was willing to take that sympathy as evidence that they were for Him. The Pharisees were against Him; their minds were filled with prejudice; they never really listened to His claims; their essential spirit was enmity to His. There were many, however, who felt the spiritual attraction of Jesus, but who were not just moved enough to cast in their lot with Him, yet who felt He was a man of God and would not rashly pronounce against Him; and for the time He was willing to take that amount of sympathy as evidence that they were for Him.

There is still a sense in which our Lord will for the meantime be content with even such little sympathy as neutrality. He asks for impartiality from every human soul. He asks each to consider His claims, and even to consider the cost. He will have no recruits by false pretences. So spiritually, to give Him a chance, not to foreclose the question, not to let prejudices darken the mind, to be sympathetically open to His influence—that negative attitude is in some stages accepted. Christ's enemies are the men who put themselves outside the pale, who will not listen, will not inquire, who let prejudice rule them, who prejudge the case as it were. It is here we see the truth in the much-abused phrase, 'honest doubt.' The inquirer after truth, the man in sympathy with spiritual things who would fain know and believe and love, is never repelled by the Saviour.

2. But this saying of our Lord was not intended to show the place of neutrality in religion; it was meant as a lesson in charity and tolerance to disciples. A man who did not belong to the recognized company of disciples had been using Christ's Name as an exorcism. It is a remarkable evidence of our Lord's influence that His Name should be thought so powerful. We know nothing further about this man. We only know that he had sufficient faith in the power of Christ's Name to try to work in the strength of it. And Jesus said, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us. But because he was not one of their own number the disciples with intolerant zeal sought to silence him. And the Master rebuked them and taught them a great lesson in tolerance. This man sought to do good in Jesus' Name, but did not have the regular hall-mark of service, did not have what we would call regular ecclesiastical sanction. Christ teaches His disciples that His work cannot be limited by any rules or any organization. Their action had been prompted by purely partisan feeling. There was a touch of wounded dignity. They forbade him because 'he followeth not *us*.' Men so easily fall into the mistake of the disciples here rebuked by Christ, of making visible communion with *them* the test of communion with Christ. This is the fruitful source of all the narrow bigotry and intolerant zeal which mar the annals of history, which have kindled the fire and sharpened the sword, which have substituted the doctrine of the stake for the doctrine of the Cross. How hard it has been even for Christ's disciples to learn the lesson that the gospel is not a matter of orders, of canonical succession, of any formal arrangement or external organization—it is spirit, it is life. The Spirit's way is the wind's way, blowing where it listeth, ordaining its prophets now from following the herds, now from the steps of the throne, now from the priesthood, now from the marketplace.

¶ In the course of his speech at the opening of the Eastern-Liturgical Week at Westminster in November, 1926, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster is reported to have used the following words: 'To Anglicans who would ask us to join in Morning Prayer or Evensong, we have but one answer to make—that of the blessed

martyr, Margaret Clitherow, "I will not pray with you, nor shall you pray with me; neither would I say Amen to your prayers, nor shall you say it to mine." '[1]

¶ I remember an instance of Keble's narrowness extremely characteristic of him. A member of a family with which he had been intimate had adopted Liberal opinions in theology. Keble probably did not know what those opinions were, but regarded this person as an apostate who had sinned against light. He came to call one day when the erring brother happened to be at home; and learning that he was in the house, he refused to enter, and remained sitting in the porch. St John is reported to have fled out of a bath at Ephesus on hearing that the heretic Cerinthus was under the roof. Keble, I presume, remembered the story, and acted like the apostle.[2]

3. The Bible is full of lessons in this wide, large tolerance which Jesus preached and practised. On one occasion unauthorized prophecy broke out in the camp of Israel, and there ran a young man and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the servant of Moses, jealous of the honour of his master, said, My Lord Moses, forbid them. But Moses' magnanimous answer was, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!' John the Baptist's disciples came to him complaining that Jesus was drawing away all the people, and they expected that he would thunder forth condemnation. But John answered, 'A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. . . . He must increase, but I must decrease.' St Paul in prison heard that others, even enemies of his, were preaching Christ, and though he suspected their motives he said, 'Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.'

When we think of the *tolerance of God* with all of us, His patience, His long-suffering with our slowness of heart, His wide, rich mercy, His free gospel of grace, how miserable are the petty barriers and limits which we set up. It is the mark of spiritual insight to be able to recognize goodness everywhere, and assert kinship with it, and thank God for it, to claim fellowship with every good man, to share in every good work.

¶ On his last visit to America Henry Drummond delivered the Lowell Lectures on 'The Ascent of Man.' His Boston engagement was to be followed with a series of addresses at the Northfield Conference. But on account of the views expressed by Drummond in his lectures in Boston a group of anti-evolutionists urged Mr Moody not to allow Drummond to speak at Northfield. Mr Moody asked a day to think over the matter, and when the deputation returned informed them that he had laid it before the Lord, and the Lord had shown him that Drummond was a better man than himself; so he was to go on.

Also, it is the highest triumph of grace in us to be willing even to be set aside, to see others do the work our own hands long to do, to praise God for every evidence of His power and mercy to the world through other channels than our own, to tear away all pride and prejudice and receive as brethren all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to comfort ourselves with the inspiring thought that He has so many instruments beyond our narrow circle, to find peace and joy in believing that he who is not against us is for us.

Limitation in Life

Mark ix. 43.—'It is better for thee to enter into life maimed.'

THERE is an overpowering and inescapable earnestness in the words of Jesus. Better for thee to enter into life maimed, crippled, one-eyed, rather than whole-bodied to be flung on the rubbish-heap and got rid of, as the city of Jerusalem used the valley of Hinnom, Gehenna, as a big incinerator to destroy its refuse. Wholeness was such a cult with Jesus—'I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly'—that one is surprised at His advocating crippling one's self, cutting off hand or foot or plucking out an eye. We forget His insistence upon the extreme difficulty of 'entering into life,' and His frank statement that to Him the gate seemed narrow and the way straitened, and 'few be they that find it,' while the road to destruction is broad, and the gate wide, 'and many be they that enter in thereby.' One wishes He had not said that; it sounds harsh.

[1] H. R. L. Sheppard, *The Impatience of a Parson*, 40.
[2] J. A. Froude, *Short Studies*, iv. 269.

But suppose He is trying to report truthfully the facts, and to tell us that desperate efforts are necessary to 'enter into life'? Who would live in a fool's paradise and suddenly discover himself bitterly mistaken?

¶ Once on a day I had a ghastly experience. The 'phone rang early in the morning, and an hysterical woman's voice bade me come instantly. I went, and found that a most brilliant student had suddenly gone crazy in the night, had with a safety-razor blade cut off his hand, and lay there laughing exultantly. 'I did right,' he cried, 'I can look Jesus in the face.' They took him to the hospital, his hand beside him in a paper bag, and from thence to the asylum, poor crazed soul! But as I stood there in that blood-splashed place, Christ's almost terror of sin, even in thought, came rushing in upon me. Pluck it out! Cut it off! Or it will fester, poison, slay your soul![1]

1. We all recognize and accept this truth in our ordinary human life. No life is developed into perfection without cutting off something. No man ever attains a strong and well-rounded manhood without repressing and limiting and extinguishing certain natural tendencies; without forbidding certain appetites to indulge themselves; without setting a gateless wall round many things which crave boundless liberty. The law indeed holds, from a point below human life, that every higher thing costs; that it is won by the abridgment or suppression of something lower. The corn of wheat must die in order to bring forth fruit. The seed-life and the seed-form must go, so that the 'full corn in the ear' may come. This fact of limitation goes along with the entire process of human education. The man who aims at eminence in any one department of life must close the gates which open into other departments. And success in any sphere necessitates his cutting off a large section of self-indulgence. He must sacrifice pleasant leisure and pleasant society, and needful rest and recreation.

¶ Carlyle once said, 'Thou must go without, go without; that is the everlasting song which every hour all our life, though hoarsely, sings to us.'

¶ The artist must bring to his work the ardour of the young lover or the missionary. No matter what his artistic organization, if he is satisfied with a few hours' hard work—no matter how hard—and can throw thought of it aside and say he has done enough for the day and will throw aside 'shop'; not for him will be a place on the highest level for all time.[1]

Besides, it is true that men love life so much that they will have it at the expense of maiming. A man will leap from the third story of a burning house, and will take the chance of going through life with a crippled limb or a distorted face, rather than stay and be burned or suffocated. 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' Where is the man who will not lie down on the surgeon's table, and have his right hand cut off or his right eye plucked out rather than die? The most helpless cripple, the blind man, the mutilated and disfigured man, will say, 'It is better to live maimed than to die.' So that, on one side at least, the truth is not so unfamiliar after all.

2. Life in God's Kingdom, like life in the kingdom of Nature and sense, involves a process of education and discipline. A part of this discipline is wrought through the agency of the man himself—by the force of his own renewed will; a part of it is brought to bear on him from without. And here, as elsewhere, development implies limitation, suppression, cutting off. A whole economy of life, the fleshly, sensual, worldly economy, goes by the board when Christ takes the soul in charge. 'How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?' The higher life costs. It can subsist only at the expense of the lower. 'No man can serve two masters.' The men who have achieved Christ-like character and success have done so at cost. What did Jesus mean when He said that His follower must hate father and mother and kindred? Surely not that Christian life is to annihilate natural affection; and yet it was quite possible that devotion to Christ might require a man to shut his heart to the appeals of natural affection. In the early days of the Church, he who went after the despised Galilean or His apostles must forfeit home and friends and social standing, and be treated as an outcast and a traitor. He could not keep father and mother and old associates who hated his Master. They would be only stumbling-blocks to him; and he must therefore cut them off, and go after Christ maimed on that side of his life. There

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Hero in Thy Soul*, 140.

[1] G. F. Watts.

never was a man who had a finer opportunity of success than St Paul had. And yet he cut them off. 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.'

¶ *Christianity is a heroism.*—People seem sometimes to think it is a dear darling, not-to-be-grumpy, not-to-be-impatient, not-to-be-violent life; a sort of wishy-washy sentimental affair. Stuff and nonsense! Christianity is not that. Christianity is an immense warning; a tremendous heroism. Christ teaches a great austerity. He teaches renunciation: the life of the Cross. He was not comfy. He had not where to lay his head. He was no rigorist, yet he tells us to die to ourselves, to take up the Cross, to follow him. Is that all comfy? Christianity is coming back to renunciation, and to a right asceticism and austerity.[1]

¶ Bishop Pattieson, in one of his letters, writes: 'I must forget myself, and think only of the work whereunto I am called. But it is hard to flesh and blood to think of the pain I am causing my dear father, and the pain I am causing to others outside my own circle here. There will be seasons of loneliness and sadness, but our Lord distinctly taught His disciples to expect it to be so, and even experienced this sorrow of heart Himself, filling up the full measure of His cup of bitterness.'

3. This cutting off and casting away must be our own act. 'If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off'—thou thyself. We are not to presume on God's taking away from us whatever is hurtful. Our spiritual discipline does not consist in merely lying still and being pruned. That may do for a vine or a tree, but not for a living will. The surrender of that must be a self-surrender.

In Christian experience, a man soon discovers certain sides on which it is necessary to limit himself; certain things which he must renounce. The things are not the same for all men, nor are they necessarily evil things in themselves, but they are stumbling-blocks, hindrances to spiritual life. We may be entangled in social customs, and spend endless time and money on things that never advance the community or any individual a single inch. One can be entwined in one's own possessions—in their acquisition, their care, their enjoyment, their increase—and never 'enter into life'—immersed in things, not in life. Jesus' advice to the young ruler would be the wisest possible counsel to not a few; 'Sell and give.' With less, many men and women would be far more useful. Possessions may impede personal service. Anything which one owns that is undedicated and not employed for spiritual ends must either be got rid of or transformed.

The Bible speaks of a sin which doth so easily beset each of us in particular. Perhaps it is over that particular sin that the battle of our life is to be fought out. If we fail there, we fail everywhere. For a man's love to God, a man's true character indeed, is not tested by all the commandments, but usually only by a few, by three or two or one. And we must judge ourselves by our behaviour in that one particular. There are many sins to which, it may be, we are not at all disposed. How, therefore, we behave in regard to those sins casts no light upon our real character or piety. But there may be one or two points in moral or spiritual practice where we are fiercely besieged, and in our case these hold the key to all our defences. Overcome there, we have yielded everywhere, for we have yielded at the one point where we were really assailed. And the converse is also true: if there we stand fast our entire soul is built up in strength and beauty.[1]

¶ No man ever took his besetting sin, it may be lust, or pride, or love of rank and position, and, as it were, cut it out by voluntarily placing himself where to gratify it was impossible, without sensibly receiving a new strength of character.[2]

4. Are we ready, then, to pay the cost of daily struggle to enter into life? Maimed, crippled, one-eyed, if need be, are we resolved to live? The alternative is the rubbish heap. This is the stern and exacting summons of the gospel of Christ.

But it is not the whole gospel. Jesus is no pioneering leader merely, bidding us follow Him, even if it means mutilating ourselves to keep up with Him. 'I, if I be lifted up will draw'; 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give'; 'Ye will not come to me that ye may have life.' A figure calls to us, fascinating us with the life He symbolizes and

[1] *Letters from Baron Friedrich von Hügel to a Niece*, p. xix.

[1] J. A. Hutton, *At Close Quarters*, 98.
[2] Jowett.

asking us to be His companions and stay with Him, that with Him we may become new creatures. He cannot relieve us of the necessity of struggling up and of struggling to stay up and of struggling to acquire the requisites for sons of God; but He draws and He holds—Himself the strongest incentive to climb up, and the staunchest preventive against slipping back.

The Law of Retribution

Mark ix. 43, 44.—'And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'

Life eternal is to know God, and that man has invoked his own punishment who has thrust God out of his life. These solemn sayings of our Lord are even more terrible than in the Parable of the Last Judgment. Whether we take the words literally or symbolically, they are full of solemn warning, even of something more than warning—of menace against the man who chooses a way of his own. It is not necessary to say that Jesus was actually quoting the Old Testament, where we have Isaiah's description of the chastisements overtaking the evil-doers of his day, a purification stern in its method, beneficent in its effect. 'It shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.' The men whom our Lord addressed knew where that figure of the undying worm came from and the unquenchable fire, and they were standing near to the historic spot thus described in the words of the prophet, where criminals were done to death, where Israel had been purified by the edge of the sword, where worms were busy on the rotting garbage, where the fire was lit to consume them and carry the stench away. Our Lord made instant use of the figure thus supplied, and applied it to the moral life, the life that we have to live now. Speaking not of death but of life, He means, 'Let nothing stand between you and right, no suffering, no sacrifice, for destruction waits upon every form of wrong, and pain follows upon every act of sin.'

Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and each meets with its due sequence of reward. There are two things here to be taken account of.

1. First, death is not of much importance. The common soldier is no theologian, the lifeboatman perhaps could state no article of doctrine with clearness and fullness, neither are they particularly anxious to count what follows death, and see with clearness what awaits them; but these men at the call of duty, of high service, of right-doing, will lay down their life. In our best moments we are all the same. Death does not frighten us if we meet it breast forward and along the line of high duty. It is not of much importance, and it cancels no debt, it only means a new focus, and not a new man. Observe that our Lord does not dwell upon it in His teaching. It is life with which He was concerned, life with which we are all concerned too, living truly or falsely, nobly or basely, and God has written His law in men's hearts so that they know it matters much to choose the highest and quit the lowest, to seek duty rather than pleasure, the good rather than the great. Jesus put this into all His teaching—the reward and the retribution begin now.

> As the tree falls, so must it lie;
> As a man lives, so shall he die.

Death is only a turning in the road. It is not a fresh beginning, it is only a new morning, and when we import death into our theology, we forget that our Master seldom or never did.

> I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
> Some letter of that After-life to spell:
> And by and by my soul return'd to me,
> And answer'd 'I Myself am Heaven and Hell.'

2. The second thing to be remembered is this—every thought reacts upon the thinker, every deed upon the doer. The penalty of every sin is contained in the sin itself. That penalty begins to work out from the moment the sin was conceived.

¶ The Greek poet Euripides taught this truth when, speaking of the sins of men, he asks:

> How think you? Are they separate winged things,
> The sins of men; and rise each day on his wings.

Up to the throne, where in a folded book
Some angel writes, that God may some day look
And utter judgment due? Not all God's sky
Were wide enough to hold that registry;
Not God's own eye sees clear to deal each sin
Its far-off justice. She is here, within.
Not distant, nor hereafter; with each deed
Its judgment fellow-born, would ye but heed.[1]

The harvest of sin may be long in coming, but it all comes, here or hereafter, in this life or in the life beyond, or in both. This is absolutely and inevitably true and very awful. 'God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Every stone flung upward from a human hand will come down with precisely the same force with which it was hurled.

¶ A character in a recent novel says: 'I'm great on titles and I thought of one, "The Bills of Time!" There's a title for an article! It's what we were speaking of—the price we have to pay for folly or carelessness. Time, the old Creator—debts that we poor mortals have incurred—the day of settlement. . . . You know how it is? You do something and you're told you'll have to pay for it. You laugh—especially if you are young—Youth laughs at Shylocks. The years go by and you forget about the debt—then a reminder comes and Time presents his bill and you are forced to pay.'

'The Bills of Time! What are the debts that we incur? Carelessness, Folly, Cruelty, Crime—all sorts of things—and the prices?—Physical Suffering, Mental Agony, Remorse.'[2]

The tissues of the life to be
We weave with colours all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown.

Is it possible that this truth so stated causes in some a certain shrinking of heart, in others a certain feeling of protest? Does somebody say, 'Is God a mere machine? Is it all inexorable justice? Is there no hope in Christ? Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Let us take our stand by the side of those who heard Jesus utter the words of our text. Repent—the old, old method, the old, old way. Repent, not of the consequences, but of the sin. Fear only to sink in weakness and shame.

[1] H. D. McKeehan, *The Patrimony of Life*, 100.
[2] R. Scotland Liddell, *The Key of Content*.

Suppose a young lad has been tempted in the shaping of his career to take advantage of someone else—to stain his soul with a lie. He has been tempted to thrust down another that he might claim what the world calls success—tempted to do something foul and base and wrong, in the hope of a profit that is to come by and by. He defends himself thus: 'If I do not, the gate will not open. I feel myself full of ambition, full of the stirrings of a newfound power. I want a chance to live. I can atone for all this by and by. Only a little sin at the outset of life, and afterwards, what there might be in fullness and richness and gladness. I might be a power for good.' Let him cut it off! It means death. Do not dally for an instant with excuses. Jesus went through this temptation before us and He was the author of the words of our text. The bending of the knee to Satan, and to-morrow the throne of the Cæsars, the power for good that that might mean! And the answer was, 'Get thee hence!' A small life rather than a great, if it must be, the Cross rather than the throne! 'It is better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into the Gehenna of fire.' The Jesus who went through the conflict chose the self-mutilation and the lonely life and the shame and the death because He knew it was not death. Enter into life maimed, for it is life eternal now. It is choosing God and knowing God. No sin was ever sinned yet that was worth while. The evil comes home to roost, and, however long it takes for the effect to work out, it comes, it comes on, and it has not done coming when death comes, perhaps it is only beginning.

¶ 'In general, I have no patience with people who talk of "the thoughtlessness of youth" indulgently. I had infinitely rather hear of thoughtless old age, and the indulgence due to *that*. When a man has done his work, and nothing can any way be materially altered in his fate, let him forget his toil, and jest with his fate, if he will; but what excuse can you find for wilfulness of thought, at the very time when every crisis of future fortune hangs on your decisions? A youth thoughtless! when all the happiness of his home for ever depends on the chances, or the passions, of an hour! A youth thoughtless! when the career of all his days depends on the opportunity of a moment! A youth thoughtless! when his every act is as a torch to the laid train of future conduct, and

every imagination a fountain of life or death! Be thoughtless in *any* after years, rather than now—though, indeed, there is only one place where a man may be nobly thoughtless—his death-bed.' [1]

3. Repentance—repentance brings every man back to the feet of the Christ, whether he knows it or not. We never yet were sorry for sin, but we were standing in the presence of the Crucified. Christ can do everything for us if we leave the future to Him. But if any man has been thinking wrong and thinking lightly about it, and thrusting from him the thought of that shadowy future, where his evil may be buried in oblivion for ever, let him make no mistake about it. The only place of safety is here.

It will cost something, but does that matter? There is only one thing we have to think about—to get rid of everything that is base and unholy and impure! Let the Christ be glorified in our life. For already the hand of that same Christ is at work there, and all that needs to be done to rescue us from the grip of the adversary He will do. He can remit all the consequences of evil if He pleases. He has suffered for the sin of the world. But we must not make terms with Him. What we must do is to cut off the hand if it be necessary, lop off the foot, pluck out the eye. But be right with God rather than wrong with the dominion of the whole world.

The Hidden Salt

Mark ix. 49, 50.—'For every one shall be salted with fire. . . . Have salt in yourselves and be at peace one with another' (R.V.).

It is not easy to be sure of what exactly was in our Lord's mind when He used the metaphor of salt, nor can we assert that He always meant quite the same. But we know what the word 'salt' suggests to us—something that counteracts insipidity and also preserves from corruption. The Christian life, He seems to say, is not all mildness and softness and relaxation. There must be something in it comparable to the stinging saltness of the sea-breeze and the cold sea-water, smarting, stimulating, giving tone to the system. Swinburne writes of the sea, 'thy large embraces are keen like pain.' James Hinton in his little book, *The Mystery of Pain*, contends that the intensest joys have an element of pain in them, and that life would be poorer were it not for self-sacrifice, which implies pain. The sacrificial quality of the Christian ethics, that in the personality which delights in hardship and accepts pain, which holds on determinedly through opposition and disaster, which inspires a meek readiness to suffer and die for God's purposes, is the salt of human life. 'Every one has to be consecrated by the fire of the discipline.' Yes; for nothing mawkish or morbid can exist in God's Kingdom.' [1]

1. Verse forty-nine, which Moffat translates: 'Everyone has to be consecrated by the fire of the discipline,' catches up the thought of the previous verses. It is ideal Christianity; it is the religious way of regarding human life. Sometimes it will be little more than a way of thinking about life. Sometimes, as the context here tells us, it will mean a very real and bitter sacrifice, in which the most precious things will have to be surrendered when they are hindering the spiritual life.

But the point of the text is that in neither case is the sacrifice acceptable except on the condition of spiritual reality. There is no abstract value in self-sacrifice. Many a man has offered a happy life to God day by day, and many a man has made his life unhappy and offered it mutilated and miserable, without attaining to the dignity of a religious act.

¶ I did not mean to speak despisingly of riches or position. I feel how precious they are, ever fraught with power, not only to help directly, but to gather around their possessors the means of reading the lessons written in the world itself, in books, pictures, music, which may in time again pour themselves forth in ever fresh forms, fitted for reaching and raising the hearts of the outcast and ignorant. Dare I ignore the value of that which we all possess in a degree? Is not our every treasure a species of wealth? Shall I say that possession has any power to destroy sympathy? Is not God stronger than *that*? Must I throw away my own material wealth—books I have loved, etc.—because I believe that God cannot keep my heart warm and open if I prize His gifts? I would have people cling, with all their strength, to the things they have, and prize them, while willing

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, ¶ 125.

[1] F. A. M. Spencer, *The Ethics of the Gospel*, 163.

to give them up, but valuing them intensely while they have them.[1]

We must begin, if need be, by denying ourselves pleasant, but harmful, things. A thing is not necessarily harmful because it is pleasant, neither are pleasant things necessarily harmless. 'Consider with thyself,' said an old Puritan, 'what is thy chiefest sin, thy most prevailing fault, thy most strong corruption, that which thou must call by David's phrase, "my wickedness"; thou shalt soon know it by the strength of thy affection to it, and thy unwillingness to forego it. Oh, clap in, put on store of salt there, rub it in hard! It may make thee smart a little, but rub it in!'

2. 'Have salt in yourselves.' It is the demand for spiritual reality within the soul as a necessity of its own religious life. Common salt has a twofold ministry. First of all, it prevents impurity and corruption. It is more than likely that our Master took His figure of the salt from a process with which His disciples would be very familiar in their own labours. They were probably accustomed to salt the fish which they had caught on the Galilean sea before they sent it to Jerusalem and other parts of the land. They would very readily catch up the Master's meaning when He used an expression so congenial to their own thought. And secondly, salt prevents insipidity; it adds a certain pungency to the flavourless, and makes the ineffective most efficient. It is in reference to these two ministries that our Lord applies this figure to common life.

There are two paramount perils in the individual life—impurity and insipidity. Does anyone doubt that impurity is one of our besetting ills? Let him take a tour through the chambers of his own being. Let him inspect his own imagination, its tendency in detached moments, its spontaneous weavings, the nature of its finished fabrics. Let him inspect his will, and mark its sluggishness in all good things; let him examine the unclean impediments that cling to it, as barnacles and sea-waste cling to the keel of a warship. Let him inspect his affections, and say, when he has subjected them to rigorous scrutiny, whether they are wells of clear water or corrupt and defiled. And let him watch his speech, and see 'if any corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth.' Long before his examination is finished his eyes will be cast down by the shame of self-revelation. There can be no uncertainty as to the great need of preserving salt.

The second peril of the individual life is insipidity. There is no fine, welcome, pungent flavour about the majority of our lives. In this sense the passage speaks eloquently to those moods of individuals or of times when a cynical spirit is abroad, when enthusiasms are out of fashion, and to many life seems 'flat, stale, and unprofitable.' There are books and there are persons who have adopted this poverty-stricken view of life, and cultivate a kind of inverted pride in being miserable. And there are but too many who, without adopting it as the teaching of any school, yet fall into a way of regarding life and feeling about it which is practically the same thing. Pleasures lose their keen edge as years increase; business becomes routine, when it no longer demands the strain of early ambitions and anxieties; 'a common greyness silvers everything.'

Now that against which our age has rebelled most vigorously is this ennui—this dullness of life. Anything will be forgiven to a man now in certain quarters—any wickedness, any falsehood—so long as he is not dull. Dullness is the one unpardonable sin. And to combat it (for it has crept up on many hearts and threatened them with death) we have much highly-spiced realism in conversation, books, plays. As if representations of horror or of vice were the only things that could be depended on to maintain interest.

¶ Mr Studdert-Kennedy quotes the following conversation which he had with a London surgeon. Through the dull roar of London traffic, as it floated in through the open window, the surgeon said quietly:

'After all, the greatest of human miseries, the most deadly of diseases is one we cannot touch with the knife or save men from by drugs.'

'What do you mean?' I said, 'cancer?'

'Oh, no,' he replied; 'we'll get that little devil yet. I mean—boredom. There is more real wretchedness, more torment driving men to folly, or to what you parsons call sin, due to boredom, than there is to anything else. Men and women will do almost anything to escape it; they drink, drug themselves, and sell their souls; they will take up mad causes, organize absurd crusades, fling themselves into lost hopes

[1] Emily S. Maurice, *Octavia Hill*, 219.

and crazy ventures; they will torment themselves and torture other people to escape the misery of being bored. Anyone who discovered a cure for that would put an end to more tragedy and misery than all of us doctors and physicians put together.'[1]

Long ago Christ met this need and gave us His own answer to the question whether life can be made interesting enough to be worth living. In His view a man's life need not be stale to him, nor dependent either on such unhealthy stimulus as we have mentioned or on any foolish heroics or hair-brained optimism. Its interest need not depend on any external sources at all. 'The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;' and that is the teaching of this passage also. We cannot kindle the heart's fires indeed, nor force life thus to take on an interest. But we can be real in our spiritual life, and we shall find that He whose task it is will freshen the dull spirit to keenness. It is thus far our task—its result is Christ's affair.

3. 'Be at peace one with another.' The discourse ends with returning to its starting-point in the dispute among the disciples.

[1] H. E. Luccock.

¶ In a London parish some years ago a disagreement arose among the Church workers who were putting up the Christmas decorations. The work was broken off, and the Christmas Eucharist was offered in a half-decorated church: the glad message of Peace to men of good-will rang out between walls imperfectly adorned, the few wreaths and flowers divided by desolate gaps of bareness.[1]

'Have salt in yourselves, *and be at peace one with another*.' Yes, salted society will be at peace. Salted character does away with impurity and insipidity, which are the two primary agents in all strife. Peace does not mean that all differences will be abolished; it means that we are fundamentally so clean that we can easily be one. Metals can be soldered together when they are both scrupulously clean. The unity which is created by purity may include manifold differences, but they will not be creative of strife. They will be clean differences, every one of them clean-edged. Mental differences are exhilarating when the hearts of the thinkers are honest and sound. A mental controversy between two self-denying men would be a rare and delicious feast. Only let the salt be there, and the Lord will answer for the peace!

[1] A. Kirby, *The Way of Peace*, 26.

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